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**Confronting Bias: How Targets and Allies Can Address**

**Prejudice Against Gay Men in the Workplace**

by

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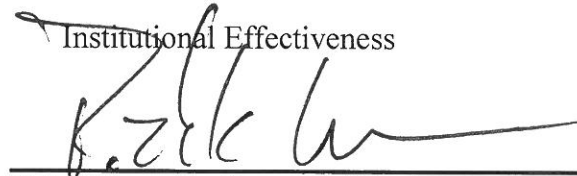


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## ABSTRACT

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While many organizations have taken steps to protect minority individuals from the negative effects of prejudice and discrimination, such initiatives may be met with limited success. That is, prejudice and discrimination may remain major problems even within organizations that adopt organizational policies to enhance equity and reduce workplace discrimination. This dissertation examines the use of an individual-level strategy that individuals can enact in response to prejudice and/or discrimination: the strategy of directly confronting the prejudice of their coworkers. This study examines the utility of confronting coworkers in the workplace with particular emphasis on the beliefs, affective reactions, and behavioral intentions of third-party bystanders following witnessing a confrontation. I anticipated that the identity of the confronter (a member of the target group or an ally) and the level of conflict (high or low conflict) as well as the type of conflict (aggressive vs. calm, and personalized to the individual vs. generalized to society as a whole) in the confrontation would differentially impact outcome variables. Indeed, the results suggest that allies (versus targets) who confront elicit more positive behavioral intentions from observers to enact such strategies in the future; that high conflict (either aggressive or personalized) confrontations elicit more negative cognitions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions than do low conflict confrontations; and that targets and allies who confront have the most impact on third-party individuals if they utilize different

strategies. Specifically, allies received particularly negative ratings when they confronted in an aggressive and personalized manner (compared to the other three strategies) and targets received relatively negative ratings only when confronting in an aggressive manner. These results held true in data obtained several weeks later. This research assesses the practicality of using confrontation as a prejudice-reduction tool and potentially informs future diversity management initiatives in organizations.

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## **Confronting Bias: How Targets and Allies Can Address Prejudice Against Gay Men in the Workplace**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Although prejudice in organizations is still a problem, research has begun to address ways that people can take individual action to reduce bias. Discrimination, the subsequent action that stems from a prejudiced attitude, can take many forms, including being called derogatory names, teased, threatened, or the object of direct verbal or physical assault (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996). It is especially disconcerting when prejudice occurs in the workplace as many individuals spend large amounts of time at their jobs, form close relationships with their coworkers, and incorporate their jobs into their self-concepts. Although the United States has made strides toward protecting employees on the basis of many demographic characteristics (e.g., race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability status, veteran status), there are still significant portions of the population that do not yet have blanket federal protection: gay and lesbian employees. However, some individual states, municipalities, cities, and organizations do offer employment discrimination protection to employees under restricted jurisdictions. There is also evidence that federal protection may be on the horizon, as the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) is closer than ever to being ratified into law (Human Rights Campaign, 2011). Despite these trends, many gay and lesbian employees remain at risk of experiencing discrimination in their workplaces. Thus, in the absence of formal protection, it is relevant to identify things that can be done on an individual level to address prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. Confronting prejudice directly is

one strategy that may be particularly effective for individuals to engage in, and serves as the focus of this dissertation.

This dissertation examines how confronting prejudice within an organizational context directly might affect the cognitive beliefs, affective attitudes, and behavioral intentions to confront in the future. Past research has found that confrontations can be effective in improving attitudes, but this experiment goes beyond past studies in several meaningful ways. First, the current study is situated in an organizational context. There is no known study that has examined organizational implications for confrontations by studying confrontations in a workplace context. Importantly, this work should inform contemporary research focused on addressing negative behaviors in the workplace. While the focus of this dissertation is on confronting prejudice and discrimination, the strategies examined should also be applicable in addressing any forms of negativity including bullying, lateral violence, incivility, or interpersonal negativity by any other name. While the prevalence and consequences of these negative behaviors have received much empirical attention (Agervold, & Mikkelsen, 2004; Glaso, Nielson, & Einarsen, 2009; Zapf, Escartin, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2011), research concerning the effectiveness of different remediation strategies in addressing these behaviors has been lacking. Thus, this dissertation informs a literature that is very sparse.

Second, this study examines the identity of the individual confronting to determine how the same confrontation is differentially perceived when enacted by a member of the targeted group or when enacted by a non-stigmatized “ally” of the targeted group. Only a handful of studies have addressed how the same confrontation might be interpreted differently depending on who enacts the confrontation. It is important to seek

not only ways in which targets can ameliorate negative outcomes but also how allies who really want to model supportive behaviors can help also. Third, the current research also clarifies an ambiguity in the existing theoretical conceptualization of confrontation concerning the optimal style (i.e., aggressive or calm, personalized to the individual or generalized to society as a whole) in which confrontations might best be enacted. Fourth, this dissertation attempts to determine what kinds of confrontation are most effective. While some past studies have examined the impact of the identity of the confronter and the level of conflict inherent in the confrontation, these variables have not been examined simultaneously. This study, however, uncovers potential interactions that may emerge among these variables and thus provides a clearer constellation of characteristics that make confrontations most effective. Fifth, this dissertation examines confrontation from the perspective of a third-party bystander. It is unclear whether merely witnessing a confrontation can be influential enough to change attitudes and behaviors in subsequent situations. However, I draw upon social learning theory and social norm clarity to hypothesize that bystanders can indeed be affected by witnessing confrontations. Sixth and finally, this work examines reactions to confrontations immediately after witnessing the confrontation as well as several weeks later to uncover the affect of short- and long-term consequences on individuals' cognitions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Incidence of prejudice and discrimination against LGBT individuals in organizations**

Prejudice typically refers to negative attitudes towards an individual or group based on group membership. Discrimination, however, typically refers to differential actions or behaviors directed toward an individual or group based on group membership. While the two are distinct, both prejudice and discrimination can have very negative consequences for individuals and organizations. Throughout this dissertation, ‘prejudice’ refers specifically to negative attitudes, ‘discrimination’ refers specifically to negative treatment (i.e., behavior), and ‘negativity’ refers to both prejudice and discrimination when a distinction between attitudes and behaviors is irrelevant.

Large-scale research suggests that gay and lesbian individuals are the targets of negativity in the workplace. For instance, research by Gallup (2011) suggests that although a large proportion of Americans (89%) do not oppose employment rights for gay and lesbian employees, beliefs about homosexuality can be quite negative: more than 50% of respondents indicated that sexual relations between two adults of the same sex is “always wrong.” Similarly, large proportions of individuals report that gay and lesbian individuals should not hold certain jobs (e.g., elementary school teachers; Bowman, 2006). There is also evidence of a “wage gap” for gay and lesbian employees: gay and lesbian individuals earn substantially lower wages than their heterosexual counterparts, and this difference was most pronounced for gay men (compared to heterosexual men; Badgett, Lau, Sears, & Ho, 2007; Elmslie & Tebaldi, 2007). Experimental evidence also suggests that gay and lesbian individuals receive negative treatment in workplace

contexts. For instance, hypothetical gay and lesbian applicants in a laboratory study were rated more negatively than heterosexual applicants with the same qualifications (Horvath & Ryan, 2003). In addition, Hebl, Foster, Mannix, and Dovidio (2002) found in a field study that applicants who were depicted as gay and lesbian received greater interpersonal hostility (e.g., frowning, cold shoulder) than those that were presumed to be heterosexual. A recent comprehensive review article by Badgett et al. (2007) suggests that gay and lesbian employees still receive prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. This is reinforced by Sears and Mallory's (2011) recent study in which they found that 42% of gays and lesbians report having experienced employment discrimination.

Experiencing interpersonal negativity is related to negative psychosocial and physical consequences. Large-scale literature reviews and meta-analyses strongly support the relation between experiencing discrimination and negative mental and physical health outcomes (Krieger, 1999; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2008). Given the detrimental consequences and the strong likelihood of experiencing workplace discrimination, it is critical to identify coping strategies that employees and coworkers can adopt.

### **Federal and organizational strategies to reduce discrimination**

Strategies for reducing negativity in organizations can be enacted at many levels. At the federal level, legislation designed to protect gay men and lesbians from employment discrimination (i.e., the Employment Non-Discrimination Act; ENDA) has reached various levels of approval over the last 14 years, but has yet to pass. Protection at the federal level is designed to shield gay and lesbian employees from experiencing discrimination. Indeed, Barron and Hebl (2010) found support indicating that the

presence of formal legislative policies that protect gay and lesbian individuals from employment discrimination is related to more positivity in 1) a controlled laboratory experiment, 2) a résumé study, and 3) a live field study. Despite these results, evidence from other minority groups – who currently have formal federal protection – suggests that discrimination still persists despite these protections. For instance, data from the EEOC indicate that there are an average of 80,000 charges of discrimination (against formally protected classes) each year, with the most recent years (2008-2010) having over 90,000 reported cases per year (EEOC, 2011). According to these statistics, workplace discrimination is clearly still prevalent and may even be increasing.

At the organizational level, strategies include diversity training and instituting formal organizational policies that offer protection. Diversity training entails engaging in a formal intervention program aimed at addressing diversity issues within a company. Both scientists and practitioners of organizational policies repeatedly have contested the effectiveness of the current diversity training. One problem lies in identifying an appropriate outcome measure. Some diversity training initiatives are designed to improve employee and managerial attitudes, while others are designed to increase the number minority employees in upper management. Unfortunately, many diversity initiatives are enacted as a way for organizations to show that they are making an effort to improve diversity, without consideration of a concrete outcome at all. Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly (2006) investigated the effectiveness of various diversity training initiatives and found that trainings designed to improve attitudes towards minorities had the least impact on actual increases in diversity at management levels. However, efforts to establish responsibility for diversity goals led to the most pronounced improvements. These results



suggest that in order to effectively combat discrimination in the workplace, third party individuals might need to take personal responsibility for addressing discriminatory behavior.

As discussed previously, having formal, legislated policies in place that protect stigmatized employees may be successful in reducing some, but not all, instances of prejudice (Barron, 2009; Hebl et al., 2002). There is also evidence that having formal policies in place at the organizational level is related to lower perceived discrimination (Martinez, Ruggs, Hebl, & Law, 2011; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001) and more positive job outcomes such as higher satisfaction and commitment and lower job anxiety and turnover intentions (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Law, Martinez, Ruggs, Hebl, & Akers, 2011; Martinez, 2010). However, not all organizations have formal policies that protect gay and lesbian employees. Thus, individuals may take it upon themselves to promote diversity in the workplace and address negativity when it occurs.

### **Individual strategies to reduce prejudice and discrimination**

There are several strategies that individuals might adopt to reduce interpersonal negativity in the workplace. These include acknowledgment, disclosure, individuation, compensation, and others. Minority employees whose potentially stigmatizing characteristics are readily apparent (e.g., obesity, handicap) might acknowledge, or openly disclose or mention these characteristics in interpersonal situations. These characteristics can draw attention away from the interaction itself, distracting interaction partners (Davis, 1961; Jones et al., 1984) but acknowledging a characteristic can break the tension caused by obtrusive thoughts and allow interactions to run more smoothly

(Hastorf, Wildfogel, & Cassman, 1979; Hebl & Skorinko, 2005; Mills, Belgrave, & Boyer, 1984).

Employees whose stigmas are not readily apparent (e.g., gays and lesbians) may not directly elicit discomfort in others, but instead may themselves experience internal discomfort (for a review, see Clair, Beatty, & Maclean, 2005). For instance, because of a norm of assumed heterosexuality, gay and lesbian employees can often “pass” without revealing their sexual orientations. However, this may cause feelings of inauthenticity, strained relationships with coworkers, or preoccupation with constantly managing one’s identity. These employees may avoid their coworkers for fear of inadvertently revealing their sexual orientation, resulting in isolation and being perceived as unfriendly. Disclosing can break this cycle of secrecy and release employees from the stress of managing a hidden identity (Wegner & Lane, 1995).

Other strategies that can be effective in reducing prejudice and discrimination involve the manner in which minority employees interact with others. Providing individuating information – information about oneself beyond what is known from group membership – can reduce the tendency to rely on stereotypes about one’s group (Kunda & Sherman-Williams, 1993). For instance, before knowing more detailed information about an individual, people tend to use heuristics and stereotypes based on group membership (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Swim, Borgida, Maruyama, & Myers, 1989). However, by providing more individualized information, minority employees can reduce the prevalence of others viewing them merely based on stereotypes about their demographic group memberships.

Another strategy involves compensating for potential negativity by acting in overly agreeable or friendly ways. Past research has shown that increased positivity is used as a strategy in that individuals who expect to receive prejudice from others preemptively alter their behavior in more positive ways (Miller, Rothblum, Felicio, & Brand, 1995; Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005). In addition, an experimental paradigm that manipulated the level of friendliness of stigmatized confederate job applicants found that those who exhibited more friendliness indeed received more positive interpersonal responses than those who were not overly agreeable and friendly (Singletary & Hebl, 2009). Each of these strategies has been shown to be effective in managing one's minority identity in organizational contexts. One additional strategy, and the focus of the current dissertation, is the strategy of confrontation.

Confrontation involves individuals in organizations – either targets of discrimination or non-stigmatized allies of targets – directly addressing prejudiced behaviors or attitudes when they occur. This dissertation will address specifically the effectiveness of individuals confronting prejudice in an organizational context with respect to subsequent beliefs, affective reactions, and behavioral intentions in response to the confrontation.

“Confronting” has been differentially defined in previous literature. Swim and Hyers (1999) defined confrontation as “the public and private communication of displeasure about an incident (p. 72).” Kaiser and Miller (2004) defined confrontation as “a volitional process aimed at expressing one’s dissatisfaction with discriminatory treatment to a person or group of people who are responsible for engaging in a discriminatory event (p. 168).” Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, and Hill (2006) defined

confrontation as “verbally or nonverbally expressing one’s dissatisfaction with prejudicial and discriminatory treatment to the person who is responsible for making the remark or behavior (p. 67),” and Ayres, Friedman, and Leaper (2009) defined confrontation as “expressing dissatisfaction with discrimination to the person(s) responsible for the discrimination (p. 450).” In the current study, confrontation is defined as verbally expressing to the perpetrator one’s dissatisfaction with negative behaviors, attitudes, or assumptions based on group membership.

### **Theoretical justification for the effectiveness of confrontation in bystanders**

While most research has examined the effects that confrontations of prejudice have on the perpetrator and the confronter, not much research has examined the effects on bystanders. This is particularly important when confrontations happen at work, in front of coworkers. There will likely be implications for organizational climate, morale, and productivity. There are many reasons that merely witnessing a confrontation should affect one’s attitudes and behaviors. From a social learning perspective, watching others confront can provide information regarding the success of confrontation as a prejudice reduction strategy. In Bandura’s classic studies (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961; 1963), children who witnessed a model adult aggress against an inflatable doll were more likely to similarly aggress against the doll. Importantly, later work by Bandura (1965) demonstrated that children who witnessed the adult being punished for aggressing against the doll, were subsequently *less* likely to aggress against the doll themselves. That is, the children were able to empathize and learn from the experiences of the adults and alter their own behaviors accordingly. Similarly, an individual who witnesses someone else being confronted for prejudiced actions should be able to empathize with the perpetrator

(e.g., “I have probably said something like that at some point myself”) and learn from their experience (by being more mindful in the future).

Closely related to social learning theory is the notion of social norm clarity. This theory posits that others can make salient information concerning what are appropriate or inappropriate behaviors and that social information regarding the appropriateness of attitudes towards stigmatized individuals can strongly influence one’s own attitudes and behaviors. For example, Zitek and Hebl (2007) conducted a field experiment in which participants were asked to fill out a survey about different stigmatized groups (African Americans, the obese, ex-convicts, racists, and gays and lesbians). After agreeing to participate in the study, another ostensible participant (actually a confederate researcher) also was recruited to participate. This latter confederate was always the first to provide an opinion that either condoned or condemned prejudice toward the target group, and then the actual participant was asked to follow-up by giving her opinion as well. Across all target conditions, participants who were exposed to an opinion condoning prejudice provided more prejudiced attitudes themselves than those who were exposed to the opinion that condemned prejudice. This difference persisted when participants were asked to provide their attitudes towards the target group again one month later. Similarly, Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, and Vaughn (1994) found that female participants were more likely to adopt more prejudicial attitudes when a research confederate provided opinions that condoned racism than when the confederate condemned racism. Another study by Monteith, Deneen, and Tooman (1996) found that witnessing the expression of anti-prejudice norms reduced subsequent prejudiced opinions.

In addition, Stangor, Sechrist, and Jost (2001) asked participants to indicate their own opinions and the anticipated opinions that they believed other students held of the percentage of African Americans who fit certain stereotypes. Half of the participants then were given feedback that indicated that the average percentage reported by other students was actually higher (+18-22%) or lower (-18-22%) than the participant anticipated. All participants then were asked to report their own perceptions of the percentage of African Americans that fit certain stereotypes. Those who were told that the student average was higher than their own subsequently reported greater endorsement of these stereotypes one week later in an ostensibly unrelated experiment. Similarly, those who were told that the student average was lower than their own subsequently reported lower endorsement of these stereotypes.

Hyers (2010) conducted an experiment in which participants interacted with two research confederates who engaged in a confrontation during a team problem-solving task. Participants that were merely bystanders to the confrontations (they did not contribute additional prejudiced remarks) subsequently reported more positive attitudes and exhibited less prejudiced behaviors towards the target group following the confrontation than before the confrontation. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that witnessing a confrontation may affect one's attitudes towards the perpetrator and the confronter of the prejudice. Specifically, Rasinsky and Czopp (2010) found that participants who watched videos in which two actors engaged in a confrontation (or not) rated the confronter as being more persuasive and more passionate, though they agreed with her less. Similarly, participants agreed with the perpetrator less and rated the perpetrator as more biased when they were confronted than when they were not. Other

research by Monin, Sawyer, and Marquez (2008) found that those who violate the status quo are often lauded by those not directly involved in the situation (but denigrated by those who are).

Witnessing confrontations can also provide instructional information on the practicalities of exactly how to confront effectively. Although empirical literature concerning the confrontation of interpersonal violence (e.g., bullying) in the workplace (most is concerned with prevalence and consequences) is relatively sparse, there is some work highlighting the benefits of education. Griffin (2004) educated nurses on effective responses to prevalent forms of interpersonal violence and provided them with small cards to remind them of these strategies. One year later, all of these nurses reported that they had used the information to confront interpersonal violence and in each of these cases, they reported that the unwanted behavior had subsequently ceased. Thus, witnessing confrontations between others can change one's attitudes and behaviors to the extent that the confrontation educates one (through role modeling) about the effectiveness of certain strategies.

Internal and external forces on third-party bystanders may also be activated to the extent that they internalize and empathize with the experiences of the individuals actually involved in the confrontation. For example, a bystander who witnesses a confrontation between others may identify with the perpetrator, especially if the confrontation is over an incident that may be ambiguously perceived to be inappropriate (e.g., derogatory jokes or comments). This bystander may realize that some of his own actions could similarly be perceived as inappropriate and thus be the target of confrontation himself. Thus,

empathizing with the perpetrator may also trigger other cognitive mechanisms that would change attitudes and behaviors in bystanders.

As early as the 1970s, research by Rokeach and colleagues (Rokeach & Cochkane, 1972; Rokeach & McLellan, 1972) found that self-dissatisfaction (e.g., feelings of guilt or shame) often resulted from the dissonance created between one's belief in an egalitarian self-concept and the experience of being labeled as prejudiced or discriminatory. In response to this difference between self-attitudes (of egalitarianism) and behaviors (reflecting prejudiced attitudes), participants frequently changed their subsequent prejudiced attitudes or actions to align with their egalitarian self-concept (Devine, Monteith, Zuwerink, & Elliot, 1991; Monteith & Voils, 1998). This paradigm is one example of the vast literature showing how cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) can positively influence individuals to change their attitudes and/or behaviors. According to this theory, individuals are motivated to reduce the discrepancy between one's attitudes and behaviors to achieve consistency. With respect to confrontation, if one is made aware that their actions were perceived to be discriminatory, and they hold an egalitarian self-concept, this knowledge should motivate them to act in more egalitarian ways in the future. However, many individuals may either not be aware of their own biased attitudes or behaviors or do not think that their actions are prejudiced. In these instances, a confrontation from another individual can act as the catalyst for self-discovery, reflection, and eventual change. This notion is strengthened by the fact that principles of fairness and egalitarianism are so embedded within US culture (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Monteith & Walters, 1998). This may be true of bystanders to the extent that they internalize the experiences of the perpetrator as being relevant to their own



attitudes and behaviors. In addition, people are motivated by both internal and external pressures to appear non-prejudiced (Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; Plant & Devine, 1998). That is, there are pressures to not respond in prejudiced ways because of internally held non-prejudiced ideals (e.g., belief in equal rights). However, there are also externally motivated pressures that come from social norms of egalitarianism and a need to not appear prejudiced in the eyes of others (e.g., fear of ostracism for negative attitudes). Thus, confrontation can act as a primer for egalitarian values and promote attitude change as a result of dissonance-reduction efforts and these egalitarian values can be either internally or externally motivated. Again, witnessing a confrontation may be enough to trigger these cognitive mechanisms in bystanders, especially when confrontations occur within social groups to which the bystanders belong.

As can be seen from these studies, those who receive social information (either as the recipients of a confrontation interaction or as a witness to it) regarding the appropriateness of attitudes towards minority groups seem to be greatly swayed by these influences. In addition, minority individuals who make the social norms with respect to diversity clear can influence attitudes within a social or organizational group. Together, social learning theory and social norm clarity suggest that others can provide information about the utility of confrontations and affect one's subsequent attitudes and behaviors by merely witnessing confrontations between two other individuals.

### **Prevalence of confrontation as a strategy**

Confrontations, by definition, may elicit even more negativity and hostility from perpetrators of prejudice and discrimination than is already present due to the very nature of a confrontation interaction. One could argue that it would make sense for targets to

ignore prejudice and avoid further escalating negativity. However, research suggests that avoidance is not a preferred strategy by many targets of prejudice. In an experimental study in which female participants imagined how they would respond to sexual harassment in an interview setting, 62% indicated that they would confront the perpetrator. However, when a second group of female participants were actually put in an interview situation with a male confederate who asked sexually harassing questions, not one of the participants directly confronted the interviewer (Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001). A diary study in which African American participants reported their encounters with racist incidents revealed that 42% responded directly and 21% responded indirectly (i.e., discussed the event with someone other than the perpetrator; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). Ayres et al. (2009) found that 46% of female participants who were asked to remember instances in which they experienced sexism reported that they directly confronted the perpetrators. An experimental study in which female participants were exposed to a male confederate's sexist remarks in the context of a group decision-making exercise found that 45% responded to the sexist comment and 16% either confronted the perpetrator directly, indicated that the comment was inappropriate, or asked that he retract his statement (Swim & Hyers, 1999). In addition, there is evidence to suggest that even among those who do not actually confront, confrontation is a strategy that is at least considered by targets when they face bias (Feagin, 1991; Feagin & Sikes, 1995). For instance, Landrine and Klonoff (1996) found that 66.4% of African American individuals reported wanting to confront a perpetrator following a racist event, but did not do so. A total of 77.9% of these individuals reported that not confronting but

wanting to do so was very stressful. Thus, confronting prejudice is often considered by minority individuals to be a viable and effective for responding to prejudice.

### **Empirical evidence for the effectiveness of confrontation**

There has been much empirical evidence to support the notion that confrontations are effective in reducing prejudice in perpetrators. For instance, Czopp, Monteith, and Mark (2006) conducted an experiment in which participants interacted with a research confederate (who confronted them or not) via an online instant messaging service. Those who were confronted experienced more self-directed negativity than those who were not confronted. This self-directed negativity was significantly related to fewer subsequent stereotypical responses and lower ratings of funniness of racist jokes. These authors also found that those who were confronted experienced more other-directed negativity and feelings of discomfort than those who were not confronted. Confronted individuals also rated their partners less positively than those who were not confronted. However, these participants who were confronted were also less likely to provide prejudiced responses on a later (ostensibly unrelated) task, regardless of the negativity felt toward the confronter. In addition, those who were confronted reported less prejudiced attitudes after the confrontation than before it. In addition, Hyers (2010) conducted a study in which participants responded to confrontations of prejudice enacted by confederates in a face-to-face interaction. All participants' incidences of prejudiced remarks were reduced following the act of being confronted.

### **Allies can be effective confronters**

Although confrontation in general may be an effective strategy for reducing negativity, it is likely that confrontation may be more (or less) effective as a function of

the status of the person who confronts. Because those who are members of the target group are likely perceived as having a vested interest in the confrontation, they are likely to be seen as less objective than those who are not members of the target group (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Most of the empirical literature suggests that individuals who are not members of the target group may be more effective (than those who are members of the target group) in reducing subsequent prejudiced attitudes, eliciting feelings of guilt, and reducing negative behaviors towards target group members by confronting. This is because nonstigmatized individuals may not be perceived as being self-interested and may not receive negative backlash as a consequence of confronting. While the term “ally” has been popularized as a term for individuals who are supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights, it can readily be applied to individuals who support egalitarian goals for any minority group to which they themselves do not belong. This dissertation will examine whether third-party bystanders will evaluate confrontations enacted by an ally differently than will confrontations enacted by a target group member.

Past research has shown that members of minority groups may be denigrated for addressing the possibility of facing discrimination. For example, Kaiser and Miller (2004) found that stigmatized individuals who cited discrimination as the reason for poor performance were rated as more of a complainer and elicited less favorable impressions from others than when they cited the objective quality of the response as the reason for lower performance ratings. This effect held regardless of the quality of the answers, the difficulty of the test, or the knowledge that discrimination actually *had* affected performance scores. That is, targets in this experiment were rated negatively when they attributed poor performance to discrimination (as opposed to other causes), even when

they actually had been targets of discrimination. This finding was replicated by Mark, Monteith, and Oaks (2007). Thus, targets who confront prejudice may similarly be seen as unfavorable complainers by bystanders.

There is also evidence to suggest that those who are nonstigmatized hold more power in organizations than their stigmatized counterparts. Because nonstigmatized individuals typically do not face as many tangible or prejudice-related barriers in education, resources, mentoring, or social networks, they typically dominate the upper echelons of organizations (Cleveland, Stockdale, & Murphy, 2000; Martell, Lane, & Emrich, 1996). As such, they are likely to have more influence and power relative to those who are stigmatized (Ely, 1995; Nkomo, 1995). This power may allow them to advocate more effectively on behalf of those who are stigmatized (and thus have less power).

Social information may be especially salient for nonstigmatized individuals if others who are similarly not stigmatized provide it. Stangor et al.'s (2001) study found that students who were given information about the prevalence of stereotypical attitudes (either more or less prejudiced than their own) changed their subsequent subscription to these attitudes to more closely match the consensus information. However, this adjustment was particularly strong when the consensus information ostensibly came from attitudes of students in the participants' in-group (same university), relative to an out-group (a rival university). In addition, once adjusted to match those of the in-group, attitudes were less resistant to change from ostensibly true, factual information about the prevalence of stereotypes. That is, once attitudes had been aligned with those of a relevant in-group, true information was not enough to sway attitudes further. This

suggests that for perpetrators and bystanders, a confrontation conducted by an individual in one's own in-group should be more effective at changing attitudes than a confrontation conducted by a target group (out-group) member. Thus, allies should again elicit more favorable confrontations as a result of not being a member of the target's group (and therefore being a member of the perpetrator's group).

Perpetrators may engage in more self-reflection if they are confronted by allies than by targets. For example, Czopp and Monteith (2003) had participants imagine scenarios in which they had committed a prejudiced act and were subsequently confronted by a member of the target group or a non-target group ally. Participants who were confronted by an ally reported that they would feel more self-directed negativity and guilt, and have a great desire to change their behaviors than if they were confronted by a target group member. These results suggest allies (versus targets) elicit in perpetrators greater self-directed introspection – an important first step in attitude change (Monteith, 1993). This affect should be similar in a bystander, to the extent that they identify with the experiences of the perpetrator.

Follow-up research by Czopp, Monteith, and Mark (2006) revealed a different pattern of responses concerning the effect of confronter status. Specifically, participants felt more self-directed negativity when confronted by targets than by allies but participants did not differ (based on the identity of the confronter) on the extent to which they provided stereotypical responses on a subsequent task. Thus, although target confronters in this study elicited more self-directed negativity, both targets and allies were equally effective in reducing stereotypical responses (all those who were confronted produced fewer subsequent stereotypical responses). So, allies can be effective agents in

reducing prejudice without receiving the negative backlash to which targets may be susceptible.

Confrontations enacted by allies also may legitimize the seriousness of the prejudiced action more so than those enacted by targets. For instance, Rasinsky and Czopp (2010) found that when allies engaged in a confrontation, the prejudiced action was rated (by witnesses) as being more serious (the perpetrator was rated as being more biased) and the participant was less likely to agree with the perpetrator than when a target individual confronted. In addition, allies who confronted were rated as being more persuasive and less rude than targets who confronted. Thus, allies are perceived as being more persuasive and do not receive as much negative backlash as a result of confronting prejudice in the eyes of third-party bystanders.

In addition to facing different reactions in response to confronting, targets (versus allies) may feel particular pressure not to confront. For example, research by Swim and Hyers (1999) asked female participants to remember instances in which they experienced prejudice. Many of these participants indicated that confronting the perpetrator would be as risky as physically aggressing against the target. This fear likely deters many minority individuals from confronting and provides yet another reason that confrontations from allies may be more strategic than those from targets. Pressures for the target to remain silent have been shown empirically as well. Swim and Hyers (1999) asked participants to imagine scenarios in which group members made sexist comments and indicate how they would respond. A second group of participants was then exposed to prejudice in a face-to-face interaction with group members; however, the rate of confrontation was much higher for those who imagined they were in the prejudiced situation than for those who

were actually faced with sexism. Later research by Shelton and Stewart (2004) found a similar discrepancy between female participants' willingness to confront sexism in a hypothetical situation and the actual incidence of confrontation in face-to-face interactions. This phenomenon was affected by the perceived costs associated with confronting. That is, participants who were told that they were interviewing for a high-prestige, desirable job were much less likely to confront the perpetrator than those who were told that they were interviewing for a low-prestige, less desirable job. Thus, the perceived costs associated with confronting may prohibit individuals who feel that they should confront prejudice from doing so. This is likely the case in organizational settings in which minority individuals may fear backlash from confronting that could result in negative career consequences. Furthermore, not confronting prejudice may communicate to others that the prejudice is acceptable and the minority individual is satisfied with how they are treated. Indeed, research has shown that people look to minority individuals to gain information about the appropriateness of prejudiced behaviors (Crosby, Monin, & Richardson, 2008). However, fear of the social costs of confronting can perpetuate a norm of prejudice and hostility. The assumption that prejudiced behavior is allowed within a social group is challenged when allies confront on behalf of targets.

In summary, allies may be more effective at confronting because they are perceived as being less self-serving and may generate less negativity from perpetrators than targets who confront.

*Hypothesis 1: Confrontations enacted by target group members (versus allies) will elicit more negative cognitions (1a), attitudes (1b), and behaviors (1c).*



### **Confrontation style matters**

Another aspect of the confrontation that should make a difference in the effectiveness of affecting attitudes and behaviors in bystanders is the manner in which the confrontation is enacted. Some individuals may react very negatively to prejudiced behavior enacted by others and internalize this negativity. However, not all confrontations are necessarily hostile or aggressive; rather, confrontations can be enacted in calm ways that nevertheless communicate disagreement with the behavior in question.

It is intuitive that the level of hostility with which someone engages in confrontation affects the way that the confrontation is perceived. For instance, confronting in a hostile or aggressive manner is likely to make the inappropriateness of the behavior under question (and the dissonance between one's actions and their sense of self as egalitarian) more salient than confrontations that are done in a calm manner. In addition, those who are confronted (or witness a confrontation) in an aggressive manner are likely to have more negative reactions to the confronter than those who are confronted in a calm way. Literature concerned with self-image has emphasized the link between threats to self-image and negativity towards others. For instance, Tangney and colleagues (Tangney, 1995; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992) found that shame that results from negative evaluations from others can easily translate into anger and negativity directed at those others. Furthermore, Baumeister and Campbell (1999) argued that, "when people feel that their favorable self-images or reputations have been impugned by someone, they may become motivated to attack that person in a violent or aggressive fashion" (pp. 218). Although aggressive confrontations may result in more negativity towards the confronter, they should still result in less subsequent prejudiced

actions because they should (in fact, more strongly) initiate self-regulatory strategies in perpetrators as well as bystanders (to the extent that they empathize with perpetrators).

The notion that different levels of conflict in confrontations are perceived differently has been supported by empirical studies. Past research has shown that different types of confrontation result in differing ratings towards perpetrators, confronters, and subsequent attitudes towards the target group. For instance, Czopp, Monteith, and Mark (2006) conducted three studies in which participants interacted with a partner (actually a confederate) via an online instant messaging service. During the joint task, the confederate confronted the participant about prejudiced responses that were provided in either an aggressive or a non-aggressive way. As might be expected, participants who were confronted in an aggressive manner subsequently reported feeling more anger, more irritation, and more discomfort than those who were confronted in a less aggressive manner. However, the type of confrontation style did not affect the subsequent prejudiced responding by participants (it was reduced in both cases). Thus, non-aggressive responding can positively affect attitudes and behaviors without making perpetrators experience intrapersonal or interpersonal negativity.

Other research by Saunders and Senn (2009) had male participants imagine a situation in which a female individual confronted them about sexism in either aggressive assertive, non-aggressive assertive, or non-assertive ways. Those that imagined being confronted in an aggressive way reported that the confronter would be perceived as being more irritating than those who were confronted in non-aggressive or non-assertive ways. Overall, these participants did not react negatively to being confronted in an aggressive assertive way about sexism. These results suggest that the costs associated with

confronting prejudice may not be as severe as one might assume (see Kaiser & Miller, 2004; Shelton & Stewart, 2004). Finally, Hyers (2010) also manipulated the style of confrontation used in the context of a face-to-face group task. In this study, the type of confrontation (aggressive or non-aggressive) did not differentially affect subsequent prejudiced behaviors (all reduced prejudiced behaviors relatively equally). However, the assertive aggressive confronter was rated as being less polite, too sensitive, and less flexible, relative to the other confrontation styles. In addition, the participants reported that they felt the non-aggressive confronter would be more willing to work with them in the future than the aggressive confronter would. Based on this research, high-conflict confrontations should be perceived more negatively than low-conflict confrontations.

*Hypothesis 2: Confrontations enacted in a high- (versus low-) conflict manner will elicit more negative cognitions (2a), attitudes (2b), and behaviors (2c).*

### **Clarification of conflict in confrontations**

Although confrontation has been a topic of study in past research, there has been relatively little done regarding the different dimensions along which confrontations may be conceived. For instance, most past research has varied the types of confrontation along an aggressive/non-aggressive dichotomy (Czopp et al., 2006; Hyers, 2010). Because past research has established that the level of conflict in a confrontation is likely an important dimension in determining the way in which the confrontation is perceived, it is crucial that conflict is fully understood across studies. However, this has not been the case. For example, Czopp et al. (2006) distinguished between high- and low-threat confrontation styles. In their low-threat condition, the confrontation was not *directly* accusatory of the perpetrator (e.g., “maybe it would be good to think about Blacks in other ways”, “it seems like Blacks don’t get equal treatment in our society”). Contrariwise, the high-threat

condition directly accused the perpetrator (e.g., “*you* should try to think about Blacks in other ways”, “*you* sound like some kind of racist”; emphasis added). Although it is certainly true that directly accusing another person of prejudice represents a high threat to one’s egalitarian self concept, it may also be useful to frame conflict in confrontations along this dimension, focusing on the perpetrator in a personal manner as opposed to making a more abstract statement about prejudice in general. By focusing on the individual perpetrator, the confronter is essentially placing the onus of responsibility on that individual; there is no other explanation for the prejudice than a conscious choice made by the perpetrator. However, when the perpetrator is not directly implicated in the confrontation, other larger societal issues are implicated as being responsible for the prejudiced action. Thus, perpetrators and bystanders may be more receptive to criticism that is not directed in a personalized way (as this is a more negative and salient event), but rather directed at society as a whole. Specifically, Czopp et al. (2006) used the following operationalization of conflict in confrontations:

By the way, for some of the last pictures of Black people, you said things like bum, person on welfare, and criminal. I know these things make sense based on the descriptions we were given...

*Low threat:* ...but maybe it would be good to think about Blacks in other ways that are a little more fair? It just seems that a lot of times Blacks don’t get equal treatment in our society. You know what I mean?

*High threat:* ...but you should really try to think about Blacks in other ways that are less prejudiced. It just seems that you sound like some kind of racist to me. You know what I mean?

Another way that conflict has been manipulated in past research is in terms of the aggressiveness or valence of emotion with which the content of the message is delivered, as well as the presence or absence of expletives. For instance, Hyers (2010) manipulated high and low conflict by using a “hostile assertive” style and a “nonhostile assertive”

style in the context of dealing with a gay roommate. In the hostile assertive style, the confronter used expletives and confronted in angry way. In the nonhostile assertive style, the confronter did not use expletives and delivered the message in a calm way. The aggressiveness with which a confrontation is delivered will obviously communicate different levels of dissatisfaction with the behavior or attitude that prompted the confrontation. Specifically, Hyers (2010) manipulated conflict in confrontations in the following way:

*Hostile:* I don't see why it is such a damn problem. Anyone who has a problem with it should get over it.

*Non-hostile:* I don't see why it is such a problem. We got along just fine. I can think of a lot worse things your roommate could be besides gay. A good roommate is hard to find so if it went well for a month, there is no reason to change anything.

Based on this past research, it is clear that conflict within confrontations has not been empirically defined or examined in a systematic way. To reiterate, Czopp et al. (2006) conceptualized conflict as confrontations that are either directed at the perpetrator personally or directed at society as a whole in a generalized way. Hyers (2010), on the other hand, conceptualized conflict as the level of aggression with which the confrontation was delivered. These two manipulations of conflict are very different. The first concerns the target of the confrontation (directed towards the perpetrator personally vs. directed towards society in general) and the second concerns the way in which the confrontation is delivered (aggressively vs. calmly). These two dimensions should not be related to each other – they should be orthogonal. Thus, one of the major goals of this dissertation will be to empirically test whether these two manipulations of conflict are indeed equivalent (as they have been treated in past research). However, no hypotheses comparing the two types of conflict will be made. Instead, only main effects will be

hypothesized within each conflict style and differences between the two styles will be assessed on an exploratory basis.

*Hypothesis 3:* Confrontations enacted in an aggressive (versus calm) manner will elicit more negative subsequent cognitions (3a), attitudes (3b), and behaviors (3c).

*Hypothesis 4:* Confrontations enacted in a personalized (versus generalized) manner will elicit more negative subsequent cognitions (4a), attitudes (4b), and behaviors (4c).

### **Goals of the dissertation**

Given the status of the literature concerning confrontation, this dissertation has several broad goals. The first goal is to extend the confrontation literature to a workplace context. While much of what is known about confrontation is relevant with respect to person perception and interpersonal discrimination, it is unclear what the ramifications of confronting prejudice within an organization are. To address this, I asked participants to watch a video taped scenario in which a confrontation occurs in a workplace setting and have them provide ratings of their cognitions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions with respect to consequences for the workplace climate. While all previous research concerning confrontation has been conducted within the discipline of social cognition and within the confines of a laboratory, this dissertation is more focused on workplace outcomes, involves videotapes using professional actors, and assesses the responses of a college as well as a non-college and employed sample.

The second goal of this dissertation is to extend confrontation research to stigmas of sexual orientation. The majority of confrontation research has focused on prejudice based on gender or race (c.f., Hyers, 2010). While negativity based on gender and race are still prevalent, it is especially timely now to investigate negativity based on sexual orientation, as more gay and lesbian individuals are coming out in the workforce (see

Hewlett & Sumberg, 2011) and homophobic attitudes are on the decrease (The Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001); and yet, gay and lesbian individuals are still not currently protected by federal law. Thus, these individuals may rely more heavily on interpersonal challenges of prejudice in the absence of this protection. In addition, investigating prejudice on the basis of sexual orientation adds theoretical importance to the existing literature. While gender and race are (usually) readily apparent, most gay and lesbian individuals can “pass” as heterosexual. Thus, those who perpetrate prejudice in the presence of a gay and lesbian individual may be evaluated differently due to the fact that they may not know that they are being directly offensive to another person (if they do not know they are gay). With gender and race, the perpetrator always knows that they are in the presence of a target group member.

The third goal of this dissertation is to consolidate many of the phenomena that have been found in past research. Specifically, the current research attempts to investigate the importance of *who* engages in confrontation (member of target group or ally) as well as examining the most effective *means* of the confrontation (aggressive or calm, personalized or generalized). It also examines the interaction of these variables. While main effects have been examined in the past, this study will try to clarify the type of confrontation that may be most effective for targets and (or versus) that which might be most effective for allies.

A fourth and important goal of this dissertation is to clarify the concept of conflict in confrontations in a way that is more nuanced than high vs. low conflict. In particular, I test two different operationalizations of conflict that have been used in past research (aggressive/calm and personalized/generalized) to determine whether these two types of

conflict operate similarly. As such, I utilized four different confrontation styles, enacted by either targets or allies. In doing this, I hoped to inform employees (managers, targets, and allies alike) concerning what strategies may or may not be effective in improving organizational diversity climate while reducing interpersonal backlash. Thus, this research should clarify what characteristics of confrontations are most effective.

A fifth goal of the dissertation is to examine whether confrontations are effective in influencing bystanders. While past research has examined the roles of the perpetrator and the confronter, none has explicitly examined the affect of confrontation on bystanders. Based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1965) and social norm clarity (e.g., Zitek & Hebl, 2007), merely witnessing a confrontation enacted by others should be influential enough to sway one's own attitudes and behaviors. This research will importantly examine the extent to which this is the case.

A sixth and final goal of this dissertation is to examine the long-term effects of witnessing a confrontation of prejudice. Past research suggests that social information regarding minority individuals can have lasting effects (Stangor et al., 2001; Zitek & Hebl, 2007) and this may be particularly true with respect to responses to confrontations, which are theorized to rely on introspection and a reduction of cognitive dissonance (which, indeed, may take time). Thus, this dissertation examines attitudes at a second time interval that is several weeks subsequent to witnessing the confrontation.

This dissertation consists of three distinct sections: a pilot study to establish the credibility of the materials, and two sets of data collection concerning the variables of interest. The first survey was administered immediately after participants watched the



video manipulation. The second data were collected between three and four weeks subsequent to the first data collection period.

### Chapter 3: Materials

The overall design for this dissertation is a 2 (manner valence: aggressive vs. calm manner) X 2 (manner content: personalized vs. generalized verbiage) X 2 (confronter identity: ally vs. target confronter) between-subjects design with a hanging control condition (an interaction in which a disagreement occurs about a topic unrelated to prejudice). In order to expose participants to confrontations in a standardized way and on a large scale, confrontations were video taped and presented to participants via the internet. All materials were accessed via an online survey management resource (Surveymonkey.com™).

**Video manipulations.** Nine confrontations were video recorded, which contained the experimental manipulations. Each of the videos depicted two male “employees” (actually professional actors) engaged in a discussion in a workplace setting. Eight of the confrontations corresponded to the two confrontation valences (hostile/calm), two confrontation orientations (personalized/generalized), and the two types of confronters (ally or target). The final confrontation was the control condition.

The videos were recorded in a workplace office that contained a large conference-style desk, framed artwork on the walls, and a potted plant in the background. The office contained two chairs positioned at one of the corners of the conference table and was angled to show that the rest of the table had chairs as well. The table was positioned against the wall revealing that the room contained a large conference table.

The videos were shot using a Canon EOS 7D digital SLR 18 mega pixel camera with a 24-70mm lens. The camera was positioned on a tripod and angled to capture only the two actors and relevant background props. When seated, the actors faced each other

so the viewer could see an approximate 45° angle profile of each actor's face. The camera was operated by a professional photographer with experience filming advertisements and documentaries. In addition, the photographer was advised by a stage director who had received extensive training in television production, staging, and acting.

Both Actor 1 and Actor 2 were professional actors with formal training and several previous professional gigs (e.g., commercials, plays, musicals). The actors wore professional attire (slacks, belts, button-up shirts, and ties) and were well-groomed to convey an office environment. The actors received the script one week prior to shooting and were familiar with the dialogue, although they remained blind to the study's purpose and hypotheses.

The beginning and ending of each video was shot independently of the different manipulations and the same footage was used for these scenes across all conditions. Each of the scenes was re-shot until both of the actors, the photographer, the stage director, and I were satisfied with the performance. Shooting transpired in one day for approximately two and one half hours. After shooting, the videos were uploaded to a computer and checked for quality of sound, lighting, believability, and to ensure all of the material that was needed had been captured. The actors waited until all the videos had been checked and approved in case some had to be re-shot. This was not the case.

After the videos were uploaded and checked, they were edited by two research assistants (working together) who were proficient in video editing. The videos were edited using the editing software Final Cut Pro™. As mentioned previously, the beginning and ends of each video were the same across conditions. The manipulations were inserted with a very short fade in/out to black between scenes. This was determined

by the two video editors to be the least distracting transition available. An additional fade in/out was inserted in the first part of the video to make the transition to the manipulation less obvious. After all of the videos were edited, they were uploaded to YouTube.com™ and then embedded directly into the SurveyMonkey.com™ surveys. The settings on the videos were adjusted to ensure that the participant could not see a condition number or see "related videos" on the YouTube.com™ website (thus revealing that there was more than one condition).

Each video began in the same way:

[both actors sit down at a conference table with notepads as if waiting for a meeting to start]

**ACTOR 1:** “Hey, I’m glad that you’re early for the meeting too because I had a question about the project I wanted to run by you: Do you know what our overhead budget is? I couldn’t find it in my paperwork.”

**ACTOR 2:** “I’m not sure, I think Charlie had that information.”

**ACTOR 1:** “Yeah, have you seen Charlie around lately? I haven’t seen him at his desk for the last couple of days.”

**ACTOR 2:** “Didn’t you hear that Charlie got fired on Monday? I don’t know exactly why, but I heard someone say that he was gay and the bosses found out about it. You know how they are about that sort of thing.”

**ACTOR 1:** “Really?”

**ACTOR 2:** “Yeah, but I mean it might be for the best, you know? Why does anyone have to be gay at work? It seems that if they just kept it to themselves then they could avoid this sort of thing.”

The experimental manipulations were achieved with Actor 1 responding in one of the following ways:

**Hostile Personalized - Target**

“Well, I’m gay and I don’t see why it’s such a damn problem. You should really try to think about gay people in a way that is less prejudiced. You sound like some kind of homophobic asshole to me, you know what I mean?”

**Hostile Generalized - Target**

“Well, I’m gay and I don’t see why it’s such a damn problem. People should try to think about gay people in a way that is less prejudiced. It just seems that a lot of times gay people don’t get equal treatment in our society, you know what I mean?”

**Calm Personalized - Target**

“Well, I’m gay and I don’t see why it’s such a problem. You should really try to think about gay people in a way that is less prejudiced. You sound like some kind of homophobe to me.”

**Calm Generalized - Target**

“Well, I’m gay and I don’t see why it’s such a problem. People should try to think about gay people in a way that is less prejudiced. It just seems that a lot of times gay people don’t get equal treatment in our society, you know what I mean?”

**Hostile Personalized - Ally**

“Well, I’m not gay but I don’t see why it’s such a damn problem. You should really try to think about gay people in a way that is less prejudiced. You sound like some kind of homophobic asshole to me, you know what I mean?”

**Hostile Generalized - Ally**

“Well, I’m not gay but I don’t see why it’s such a damn problem. People should try to think about gay people in a way that is less prejudiced. It just seems that a lot of times gay people don’t get equal treatment in our society, you know what I mean?”

**Calm Personalized - Ally**

“Well, I’m not gay but I don’t see why it’s such a problem. You should really try to think about gay people in a way that is less prejudiced. You sound like some kind of homophobe to me.”

**Calm Generalized - Ally**

“Well, I’m not gay but I don’t see why it’s such a problem. People should try to think about gay people in a way that is less prejudiced. It just seems that a lot of times gay people don’t get equal treatment in our society, you know what I mean?”

As discussed previously, these confrontation styles were adapted from past research that has manipulated the amount of conflict in confrontations (Czopp et al., 2006; Hyers, 2010). All videos ended in the same way:

**ACTOR 2:** “I guess you’re right.”

Participants in the control condition saw a video with the following scenario depicted:

**ACTOR 1:** “Hey, have you seen Charlie around lately? I haven’t seen him at his desk for the last couple of days.”

**ACTOR 2:** “Didn’t you hear that Charlie got fired on Monday? I don’t know exactly why, but I heard someone say that he was having problems at home that were interfering with his work and the bosses found out about it. You know how they are about that sort of thing. “

**ACTOR 1:** “Really?”

**ACTOR 2:** “Yeah, but I mean it might be for the best, you know? We need people who are going to get their jobs done and not be distracted.”

**ACTOR 1:** “Well, I’m sorry that you feel that way. Everyone goes through hard times sometimes.”

**ACTOR 2:** “I guess you’re right.”

### **Chapter 4: Pilot study**

To ensure that these manipulations were successful, 183 undergraduate students at a private Southern university participated in a pilot study. After signing up for the study, and consenting to participate, they were provided a URL hyperlink to the online study. All study materials were accessed via the survey management resource Surveymonkey.com<sup>TM</sup>. These participants began by viewing photographs of each of the actors and provided ratings based on initial reactions. Ratings were made (on 7-point Likert scales anchored by (1) = strongly disagree and (7) = strongly agree) based on the actors' perceived (a) attractiveness, (b) intelligence, (c) believability, (d) persuasiveness, (e) rudeness, (f) trustworthiness, (g) ability to convey authority, (h) being a troublemaker, (i) professionalism, (j) masculinity, (k) femininity, (l) heterosexuality, and (m) homosexuality. These participants then watched one of nine video interactions and were asked to what extent the interaction they saw was (a) believable, (b) realistic, and (c) to what extent they could understand what was said by each of the actors. Following the video, participants provided ratings based on their cognitive, attitudinal, and likely behavioral reactions to the videos. These data were used only to determine which items were most relevant within each of these measures. In addition, participants were asked to rate the extent to which the confronter addressed the perpetrator in a manner that was (a) aggressive, (b) calm, (c) direct (personalized), or (d) indirect (generalized). Finally, these participants were asked to indicate the sexual orientation of each of the actors.

### **Results**

With respect to the believability of the videos, the videos were not rated as being differentially realistic or believable as a result of which actor played which role.

However, Actor 1 was rated as being significantly more attractive, persuasive, trustworthy, authoritative, masculine, and heterosexual, and significantly less rude, feminine, and homosexual than Actor 2. Due to these differences, only Actor 1 was presented in the role of the confronter in subsequent testing.

Each manipulation was determined to be sufficiently valid. Specifically, individuals in the aggressive condition rated the confrontation as more aggressive ( $M = 5.16$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) than those in the calm condition ( $M = 2.72$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ),  $t(156.55) = 10.67$ ,  $p < .001$ , and those in the calm condition rated the confrontation as more calm ( $M = 5.47$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ) than those in the aggressive condition ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ),  $t(165) = 14.54$ ,  $p < .001$ . Similarly, those in the personalized condition rated the confrontation as being more direct ( $M = 6.23$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) than those in the generalized condition ( $M = 5.84$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ),  $t(165) = 2.30$ ,  $p = .02$ , and those in the generalized condition rated the confrontation as more indirect ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) than those in the personalized condition ( $M = 1.88$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ),  $t(159.65) = 2.30$ ,  $p = .02$ . Finally, when the actor portrayed himself as gay, he was correctly identified by participants as being gay 96.0% of the time ( $N = 2$  failed). Similarly, when the actor stated as an ally that he was “not gay”, he was identified as being not gay 93.2% of the time ( $N = 2$  failed). Thus, the manipulations and videos were deemed acceptable for further testing.

The cognitive, attitudinal, and likely behavioral ratings items were submitted to an exploratory principal axis factor analyses with promax rotation to determine factor structure. Each of the scales revealed one factor. In addition, these items were subjected to Cronbach’s alpha reliability analyses to establish reliability. All of the scales displayed acceptable reliability; however, one goal of the pilot study was to reduce the total number



of items needed in the larger data collection effort. Thus, any item with a low item-to-total correlation coefficient that was simultaneously not likely to reduce the overall alpha level of the scale was removed until the alpha level dropped significantly. Using this method, the number of items for the cognitions scale was reduced from 12 to seven, the number of items on the attitudes scale was reduced from 14 to 10, and the number of items on the behavioral intentions scale was reduced from six to five. The resulting alpha reliabilities for the cognitions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions scales were .86, .85, and .72, respectively for the pilot study.

## Chapter 5: Time One

In this central study, participants watched one of the nine confrontations, and then provided ratings in response to what they saw.

### Participants

In total, 365 individuals participated in this study. Of these, 177 were employed full-time within the hospitality industry and 188 were students at a private Southern university<sup>1</sup>. Thirty-three participants were missing more than 10% of the responses and thus, were dropped from the analysis. In addition, 13 failed the sexual orientation manipulation check and 17 took longer than an hour to complete the study (the average time, removing these outliers was 15 minutes and 13 seconds). Removing these individuals resulted in 302 usable responses for analysis<sup>2</sup>.

The average age of these participants was 27.4 years old ( $SD = 11.99$ ), and 45.4% ( $N = 137$ ) indicated that they were men (2.6%,  $N = 9$  did not report their genders). Most participants (81.1%,  $N = 245$ ) indicated that they identified as heterosexual, 11.6% ( $N =$

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<sup>1</sup> All subsequent analyses were conducted with the pool of participation (hospitality employees vs. students) as an independent variable. Of the 24 analyses conducted that included this variable (including main effects and interactions), only one significant effect was found (a main effect for cognitions such that students reported more favorable cognitions than employees), which would be expected by chance alone. Thus, the two samples were combined and the pool of participation was entered as a covariate in all analyses.

<sup>2</sup> Including these participants did not alter the conclusions drawn in this study.

35) indicated that they were homosexual, 2.3% (N = 7) indicated they were bisexual, 1.0% (N = 3) indicated they were asexual, and 4% (N = 12) did not indicate a sexual orientation.

Participants were recruited in a variety of ways. First, students were recruited via an online experiment portal. These participants received partial course credit in exchange for their participation. Second, employed participants were recruited primarily via e-mail solicitation through the LinkedIn <sup>TM</sup> social networking website. Third, these employed participants were encouraged to forward the URL hyperlink for the study to others in their own networks who would qualify to participate as well. Fourth, the president of a major online travel and hospitality website agreed to send an invitation to his contacts within the hospitality industry to participate in the study. Fifth, nine well-connected alumni of a large Northeastern university's hotel and restaurant management department distributed an e-mail invitation to their contacts. All participants who were willing to participate (either through a college sign-up or an e-mail invitation) learned they would be taking a short survey about "conflict in the workplace." They were provided a URL link that randomly assigned them to one of nine experimental conditions. The e-mail invitation for the nonstudent sample also informed them that in exchange for their time, they would be entered into a raffle to win an iPad <sup>TM</sup>.

## **Measures**

Participants made ratings reflecting their cognitions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions in response to the interaction that they watched. All responses were measured using 7-point Likert scales ranging from (1) = strongly disagree to (7) = strongly agree unless otherwise stated.

**Responses to the confrontation.** Participants' cognitive beliefs in response to the interaction were measured by indicating the extent to which participants agreed with the following statements: a) "I think this situation was handled effectively," b) "I think this interaction will have a positive effect on the [confronter]," c) "I think this interaction will have a positive effect on the [perpetrator]," d) "I think this interaction was ridiculous (R)," e) "I think this interaction was a waste of time (R)," f) "The workplace was probably negatively affected by this interaction," and g) "The workplace was probably positively affected by this interaction." The order of these questions within each survey was randomized across participants. A Cognitive Beliefs Composite was created by taking the arithmetic mean of these items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$ )<sup>3</sup>.

Participants' affective reactions to the interaction were measured by indicating to what extent they agreed with the following statements: a) "This interaction made me feel uneasy" (R), b) "This interaction made me feel empowered," c) "This interaction made me feel awkward" (R), d) "I felt moved by this interaction," e) "Watching this interaction was informative," f) "This interaction was valuable," g) "This interaction was worth it," h) "This interaction was admirable," i) "This interaction made me feel more positively toward gay people," and j) "This interaction made me feel inspired." The order of these questions within each survey was randomized across participants. An Affective Reactions

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<sup>3</sup> For items 2 and 3 the verbiage "man in blue" and "man in white" were used in place of "confronter" and "perpetrator", respectively, to correspond to the appropriate actors. In addition, participants were presented pictures of each of the actors to reduce confusion.

Composite was created by taking the arithmetic mean of these items (Cronbach's alpha = .85).

Participant's likelihood of confronting in response to the interaction were measured by indicating to what extent they agreed with the following statements: a) "I will be likely to confront others in the future, having watched this interaction," b) "This interaction showed me how to act in similar situations that I might encounter", c) "This interaction gave me information about how to confront effectively," d) "This interaction inspired me to stand up for others in the future," and e) "I will NOT confront others in the future after having watched this interaction" (R). The order of these questions within each survey was randomized across participants. A Confrontation Likelihood Composite was created by taking the arithmetic mean of these items (Cronbach's alpha = .79).

**Covariates.** It is likely that participants' responses were influenced by other variables that are not manipulated in this design. Two such covariates are the extent to which participants feel that confrontation is a useful strategy in general (*a priori*) and the extent to which participants have positive (or negative) attitudes towards gay men. As such, to measure participants' attitudes towards confrontation, they indicated to what extent they agreed with the following statements: a) "People should feel comfortable telling others that they disagree," b) "Prejudice should be handled directly," c) "Not confronting others is as bad as being prejudiced yourself," d) "Confronting other can often make things worse," e) "People don't learn anything when they are confronted about their prejudices" (R), f) "Confronting is an effective way of dealing with prejudice in others," and g) "There would be less prejudice in the world if more people confronted when they were offended." The order of these questions within each survey was

randomized across participants. An Attitudes Toward Confrontation Composite was created by taking the arithmetic mean of these items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .74$ ).

To assess participants' attitudes towards gay men, they indicated to what extent they agreed with the following statements from Herek's (1988) Attitudes Towards Gay Men Scale: a) "Male homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples," b) "I think male homosexuals are disgusting" (R), c) "Male homosexuals should not be allowed to teach school" (R), d) "Male homosexuality is a perversion" (R), e) "Just as in other species, male homosexuality is a natural expression of sexuality in human men," f) "If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them" (R), g) "I would *not* be upset if I learned my son were a homosexual," h) "Homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong" (R), i) "The idea of male homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me" (R), and j) "Male homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should *not* be condemned." An Attitudes Toward Gays (ATG) Composite was created by taking the arithmetic mean of these items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ).

**Demographics.** Finally, participants provided their age (open-ended response), gender (male, female, or other), industry (hotel, restaurant, bar, casino, student, or other), job level (entry level, lower management, mid-level management, or upper management), and sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual, or other).

## **Procedure**

After receiving the e-mail invitation (described previously), consenting to participate in the study, and following the URL hyperlink to access the survey, participants read the following introduction:

In this study, you will be asked to watch a reenactment of an incident that actually occurred in an organization and provide ratings based on what you see. Please respond as honestly as possible and give your best judgment, even though you are only seeing a small sample of behavior. There are no wrong (or right) answers!

After viewing each video, participants then made ratings concerning their cognitions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions in response to the interaction they saw. Following these ratings, they made ratings concerning the moderator variables (attitudes towards confrontation and attitudes towards gay men) and then provided demographic information. Finally, student participants were thanked for their participation and asked to provide student identification information in order to assign course credit. The nonstudent, employed participants were thanked for their participation and given the option to enter their contact information for inclusion into the raffle.

## Results

All between-groups hypothesis tests were conducted using *a priori* contrast analyses. Specifically, I created a variable to identify the condition and conducted a one-way ANOVA on this variable, with Attitudes Towards Confronting and Attitudes Towards Gay Men added as covariates. Then, between-group contrasts tested specific hypotheses. All analyses were performed using JMP <sup>TM</sup> statistical software.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that confrontations enacted by target group members would be rated less favorably than would those enacted by non-target allies. With respect to cognitions and attitudes, this hypothesis was not supported,  $F(1, 284)=0.41, p = .52, \omega^2 = 0$ , and,  $F(1, 284) = 0.03, p = .86, \omega^2 = 0$ , respectively. However, with respect to behavioral intentions, this hypothesis was supported such that participants viewing confrontations by allies indicated feeling more intentions to act ( $M = 4.29, SD = 1.12$ )

than when they viewed confrontations by targets ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ),  $F(1, 284) = 4.35$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\omega^2 = .01$ .

Hypothesis 2 proposed that confrontations enacted with high conflict would be rated less favorably than those enacted with low conflict. With respect to cognitions, this hypothesis was supported such that confrontations enacted with low conflict (calm and generalized;  $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) elicited more positive cognitive beliefs than confrontations enacted with high conflict (aggressive and personalized;  $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $F(1, 284) = 23.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\omega^2 = .07$ . With respect to attitudes, this hypothesis was again supported such that confrontations enacted with low conflict (calm and generalized;  $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) elicited more positive affective reactions than confrontations enacted with high conflict (aggressive and personalized;  $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $F(1, 284) = 16.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\omega^2 = .04$ . Similarly, with respect to behavioral intentions, this hypothesis was again supported such that participants who viewed confrontations enacted with low conflict (calm and generalized) indicated being more inclined to follow-up with behavioral intentions of their own to confront ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) than when they viewed confrontations enacted with high conflict (aggressive and personalized;  $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ),  $F(1, 284) = 23.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\omega^2 = .06$ .

Hypothesis 3 proposed that confrontations enacted in an aggressive manner would be rated less favorably than those enacted in a calm manner. With respect to cognitions, this hypothesis was supported such that calm confrontations ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ), elicited more favorable cognitive beliefs than aggressive confrontations ( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ),  $F(1, 284) = 29.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\omega^2 = .07$ . With respect to attitudes, this hypothesis was supported such that calm confrontations ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ), elicited more favorable



affective reactions than aggressive confrontations ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ),  $F(1, 284) = 12.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\omega^2 = .03$ . With respect to behavioral intentions, this hypothesis was again supported such that participants who witnessed calm confrontations ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ), reported higher likelihood of confronting than participants who witnessed aggressive confrontations ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ),  $F(1, 284) = 21.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\omega^2 = .05$ .

Hypothesis 4 proposed that confrontations that were personalized to the perpetrator would be rated less favorably than those generalized to society as a whole. With respect to cognitive beliefs, this hypothesis was not supported,  $F(1, 284) = 1.77$ ,  $p = .19$ ,  $\omega^2 = 0$ . However, with respect to attitudes, this hypothesis was supported such that participants who viewed generalized confrontations ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) reported more positive affect than participants who viewed personalized confrontations ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ),  $F(1, 284) = 5.03$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\omega^2 = .01$ . This hypothesis was also supported with respect to behavioral intentions such that participants who witnessed generalized confrontations ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) reported a higher likelihood of confronting than participants who witnessed personalized confrontations ( $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ),  $F(1, 284) = 4.95$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\omega^2 = .01$ .

### **Exploratory analyses**

In addition to testing the specific hypotheses outlined in this dissertation, which were based on previous work and theory, additional significant patterns of results that were not hypothesized in a formal way emerged. These results answer the general question, “What is the best way for targets and allies to confront prejudice?” As will be described shortly, the strategy that might be perceived as being most effect for allies may not be the best strategy for targets.

## Recommendations for allies

Although the above analyses test an overall difference between allies and targets, they do not describe the full spectrum of responses to confrontations based on aggressiveness and directness within each of these groups. Thus, the following analyses describe the pattern of responding for confrontations enacted by allies. See Tables 1, 2, and 3 for means and standard deviations of cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors, respectively.

**Cognitions.** Figure 1 depicts the pattern of responding for cognitions. Allies who confronted in an aggressive, personalized way elicited less positive cognitive beliefs than allies who adopted any of the other three strategies,  $F(1, 284) = 18.90, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04$ , or the control condition,  $F(1, 284) = 8.42, p < .01, \omega^2 = .02$ . In addition, allies who confronted in a calm, personalized manner elicited more positive beliefs than allies who adopted aggressive, generalized or calm, generalized strategies  $F(1, 284) = 5.89, p = .02, \omega^2 = .01$ , or the control condition,  $F(1, 284) = 5.12, p = .02, \omega^2 = .01$ . Allies who adopted aggressive, generalized and calm, generalized strategies were not rated significantly differently,  $F(1, 284) = 0.04, p = .84, \omega^2 = 0$ .

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Cognitions in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Allies*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	3.36 <sup>a</sup>	0.95
Aggressive	Generalized	4.12 <sup>b</sup>	1.13
Calm	Personalized	4.68 <sup>bc</sup>	0.95
Calm	Generalized	4.22 <sup>b</sup>	1.01
Control		4.16 <sup>b</sup>	0.94

*Note.* Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

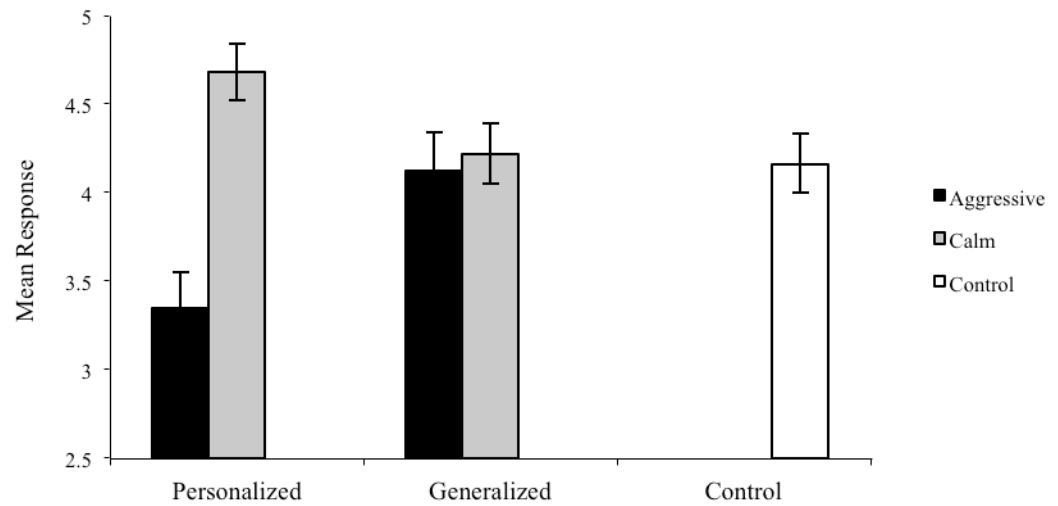


Figure 1. Mean ratings of cognitions in response to confrontations enacted by allies.

**Attitudes.** Figure 2 depicts the pattern of responding for attitudes. Allies who confronted in an aggressive, personalized way elicited less positive affective reactions ratings than allies who adopted the other three strategies,  $F(1, 284) = 10.90, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03$ , (the other three strategies were not rated as being significantly different from each other,  $F(1, 284) = 0.21, p = .65, \omega^2 = 0$ ). Interestingly, participants in the control condition did not provide affective ratings that were significantly different from participants in the aggressive, personalized condition,  $F(1, 284) = 0.18, p = .68, \omega^2 = 0$ , but these participants did provide affective reactions that were rated significantly lower than participants in the other three conditions,  $F(1, 284) = 9.91, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02$ .

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Attitudes in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Allies*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	3.63 <sup>ac</sup>	1.21
Aggressive	Generalized	4.19 <sup>b</sup>	1.08
Calm	Personalized	4.29 <sup>b</sup>	0.68
Calm	Generalized	4.28 <sup>b</sup>	0.95
Control		3.75 <sup>ac</sup>	0.77

*Note.* Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

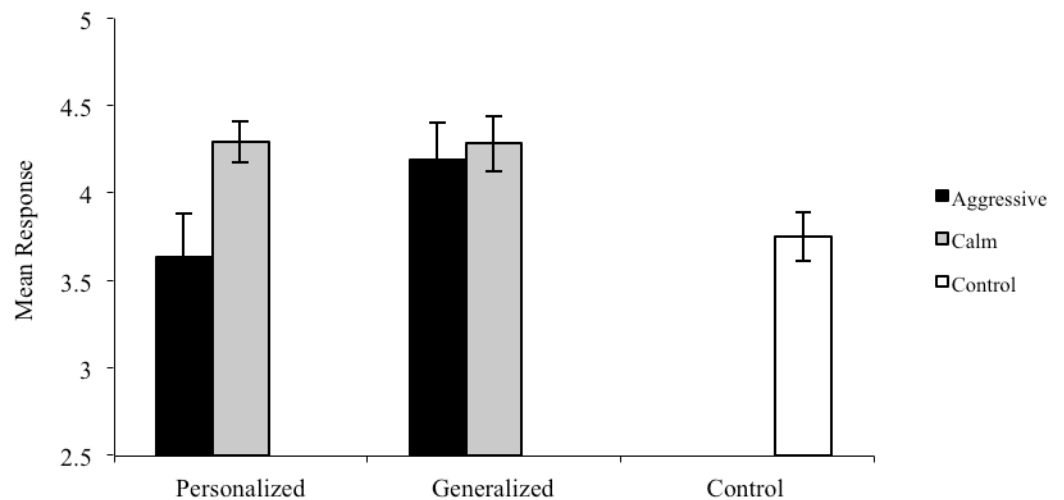


Figure 2. Mean ratings of attitudes in response to confrontations enacted by allies.

**Behavioral intentions.** Figure 3 depicts the pattern of responding for behavioral intentions. Allies who confronted in a aggressive, personalized way received less positive behavioral intentions ratings than allies who adopted the other three strategies,  $F(1, 284) = 9.54, p < .01, \omega^2 = .03$ , (the other three strategies were rated as being equally effective,  $F(1, 284) = 1.05, p = .31, \omega^2 = 0$ ). Participants indicated that they had more intentions to confront in the future in the control condition than they did in the aggressive,

personalized condition,  $F(1, 284) = 5.26, p = .02, \omega^2 = .01$ , but this was not different from the other three conditions,  $F(1, 284) = 0.57, p = .45, \omega^2 = 0$ .

Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Behavioral Intentions in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Allies*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	3.72 <sup>a</sup>	1.14
Aggressive	Generalized	4.29 <sup>b</sup>	1.1
Calm	Personalized	4.43 <sup>b</sup>	1.05
Calm	Generalized	4.54 <sup>b</sup>	1.11
Control		4.34 <sup>b</sup>	0.92

*Note.* Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

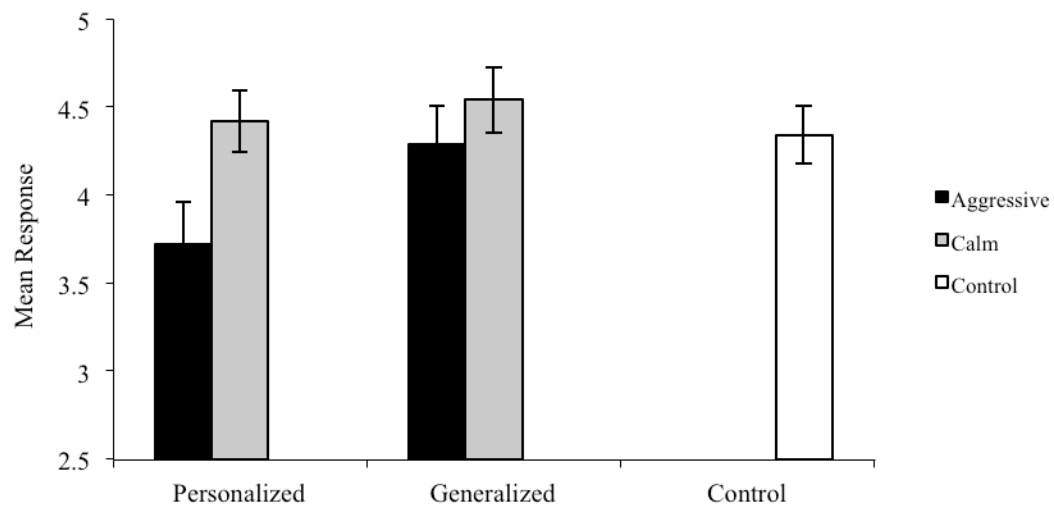


Figure 3. Mean ratings of behavioral intentions in response to confrontations enacted by allies.

In summary, allies who adopted a hostile, personalized confrontation style received the most negative ratings. The other three strategies were not rated as being different from each other, except in the case of cognitions, in which case a calm, personalized manner was rated as being superior.

## Recommendations for targets

The following patterns of results were obtained for confrontations enacted by targets. See Tables 4, 5, and 6 for means and standard deviations of cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors, respectively.

**Cognitions.** Figure 4 depicts the pattern of responding for cognitions. Targets who confronted in a calm, generalized way elicited more positive beliefs than targets who adopted the other three strategies,  $F(1, 284) = 6.60, p = .01, \omega^2 = .05$ . The difference between targets who were calm and generalized and those who were calm and personalized was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 284) = 0.85, p = .36, \omega^2 = .02$ . Targets who were calm elicited more positive beliefs than those who were aggressive,  $F(1, 284) = 16.45, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04$ . So, for targets, being hostile was perceived as being particularly negative. The control condition only received significantly different ratings of beliefs from the aggressive, personalized condition,  $F(1, 284) = 4.95, p = .03, \omega^2 = .01$ .

Table 4

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Cognitions  
in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Targets*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	3.53 <sup>a</sup>	1.17
Aggressive	Generalized	3.69 <sup>ac</sup>	1.04
Calm	Personalized	4.22 <sup>bc</sup>	1.09
Calm	Generalized	4.45 <sup>bc</sup>	1.28
Control		4.16 <sup>bc</sup>	0.94

*Note.* Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

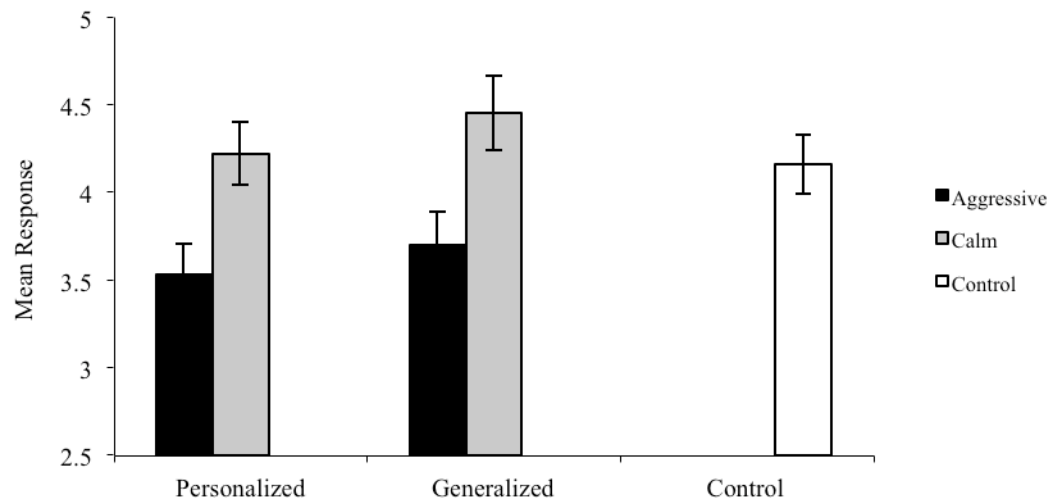


Figure 4. Mean ratings of cognitions in response to confrontations enacted by targets.

**Attitudes.** Figure 5 depicts the pattern of responding for attitudes. Participants who saw targets confront in a calm, generalized way reported more positive affective reactions participants who saw targets that adopted any of the other three strategies,  $F(1, 284) = 6.60, p = .01, \omega^2 = .01$ , (the other three strategies were not rated as being significantly different,  $F(1, 284) = 2.01, p = .16, \omega^2 = 0$ ). Participants in the control condition reported significantly lower affective reactions than participants in the calm, personalized and calm, generalized conditions,  $F(1, 284) = 5.12, p = .02, \omega^2 = .02$ , but not differently than the other two strategies,  $F(1, 284) = 1.11, p = .29, \omega^2 = 0$ .

Table 5

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Attitudes in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Targets*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	3.78 <sup>bc</sup>	1.06
Aggressive	Generalized	3.88 <sup>bc</sup>	0.8
Calm	Personalized	4.07 <sup>a</sup>	1.09
Calm	Generalized	4.33 <sup>b</sup>	1.13
Control		3.75 <sup>bc</sup>	0.77

*Note.* Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

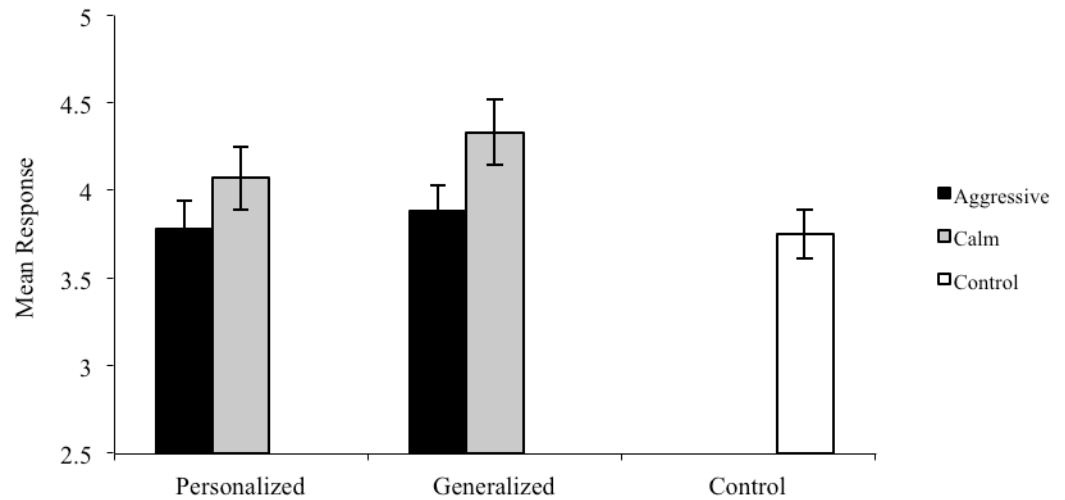


Figure 5. Mean ratings of attitudes in response to confrontations enacted by targets.

**Behavioral intentions.** Figure 6 depicts the pattern of responding for behavioral intentions. Targets who confronted in a calm, generalized way elicited a higher likelihood of confronting than targets who adopted the other three strategies,  $F(1, 284) = 13.60, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03$ , (the other three strategies were not rated as being significantly different,  $F(1, 284) = 3.89, p = .06, \omega^2 = 0$ ). The difference between targets who were calm and general and those who were calm and personal was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 284) = 3.56, p = .06, \omega^2 = .01$ . Targets who were calm elicited a higher likelihood to confront than targets who were hostile,  $F(1, 284) = 14.03, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03$ . So again, for targets, being hostile was perceived as being particularly negative. The control condition was not rated significantly differently from the two calm conditions,  $F(1, 284) = 0, p = .95, \omega^2 = 0$ , however, participants in this conditions reported stronger likelihood of confronting than participants in the aggressive conditions,  $F(1, 284) = 8.15, p < .01, \omega^2 = .02$ .

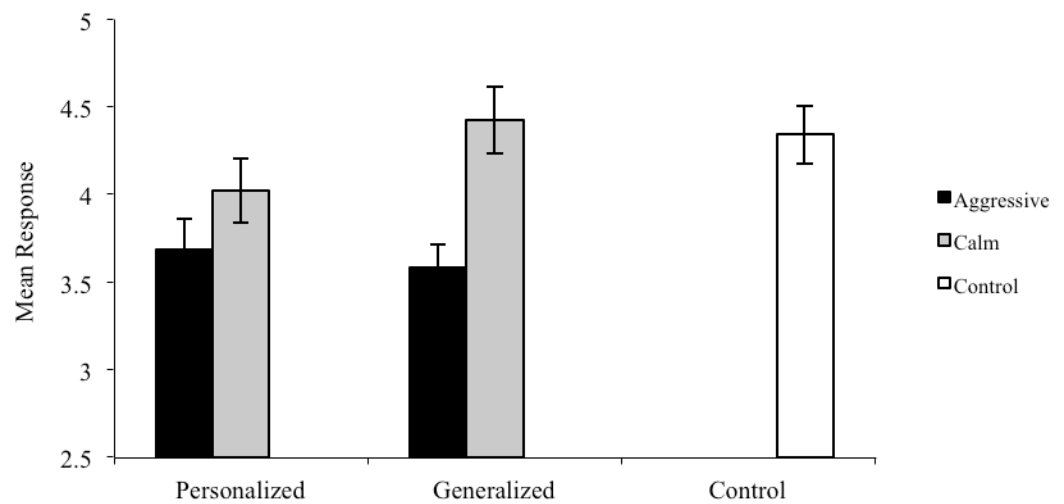


Table 6

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Behavioral Intentions in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Targets*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	3.68 <sup>b</sup>	1.19
Aggressive	Generalized	3.58 <sup>b</sup>	0.74
Calm	Personalized	4.02 <sup>c</sup>	1.13
Calm	Generalized	4.42 <sup>ac</sup>	1.15
Control		4.34 <sup>ac</sup>	0.92

*Note.* Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.



*Figure 6.* Mean ratings of behavioral intentions in response to confrontations enacted by targets.

Overall, targets who confronted in a calm, generalized way received the most positive ratings. However, with respect to cognitions and behavioral intentions, calm, generalized confrontations were not rated as being different from calm, personalized confrontations. Thus, for targets, hostility seems to be particularly detrimental.

### **Clarification of two types of conflict**

Another goal of this study was to examine the relative effects of the valence of the confrontation (aggressive or calm) compared to the orientation of the confrontation (personalized or generalized). These constructs must be examined with respect to their

interactions with each other and with respect to the identity of the confronter. With regard to the aggressiveness of the confrontation, targets who were general elicited much more positive beliefs,  $F(1, 284) = 8.55, p < .01, \omega^2 = .02$ , more positive affective reactions,  $F(1, 284) = 4.16, p = .04, \omega^2 = .01$ , and a higher likelihood to confront,  $F(1, 284) = 12.40, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03$ , when they were also calm (rather than aggressive). This pattern was not found for targets who confronted in a personalized way. A very different pattern emerged for allies. Allies who were general were not rated differently based on level of aggression for any of the outcome variables. They did, however, elicit more positive cognitive beliefs,  $F(1, 284) = 25.41, p < .001, \omega^2 = .06$ , more positive affective reactions,  $F(1, 284) = 9.53, p < .01, \omega^2 = .02$ , and a higher likelihood to confront,  $F(1, 284) = 9.31, p < .01, \omega^2 = .02$ , when they were personal and calm than when they were personal and aggressive.

With regard to the personal nature of the confrontation, the orientation only made a consistent difference for allies who were aggressive such that also being general elicited more positive beliefs,  $F(1, 284) = 8.04, p < .01, \omega^2 = .02$ , affective reactions,  $F(1, 284) = 5.82, p = .02, \omega^2 = .01$ , and a higher likelihood to confront,  $F(1, 284) = 4.92, p = .03, \omega^2 = .01$ . In addition, allies who were calm and personal elicited more positive beliefs than allies who were calm and general,  $F(1, 284) = 4.24, p = .04, \omega^2 = .01$ .

## Chapter 6: Time Two

Three to four weeks after participating in Time One, 284 participants (or all of whom initially had provided follow-up contact information) were contacted again via e-mail and asked to participate in a very short follow-up study. The e-mail thanked them for their previous participation, informed them that this second survey consisted only of eight questions, and explained that at the end of this second survey, there would be a more in-depth description of the study's purpose and initial results from Time One. A total of 184 of these participants responded to the Time Two survey (response rate = 64.79%). Of these, one individual indicated that he did not remember anything from the video and responded at the midpoint on all subsequent questions. Removing this individual resulted in 183 responses for analyses. Data collection transpired over a one-week period.

After consenting to this second part of the study, participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale to what extent they remembered the video (on 7-point Likert scales anchored by (1) = I do not remember anything and (5) = I have a photographic memory). They were then asked to briefly describe the interaction they saw in their own words<sup>4</sup>. Following this, participants responded to six items (two for each outcome variable) that were also presented at Time One. The two cognitive beliefs items included: a) "This situation was handled effectively," and b) "The workplace was

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<sup>4</sup> One participant indicated that they did not remember anything on this scale, but subsequently correctly described the interaction. This individual was retained in the analyses.

probably negatively affected by this interaction” (R;  $\alpha = .69$ ). The two affective reactions items included: a) “This situation made me feel empowered,” and b) “This interaction made me feel more positively towards gay people” ( $\alpha = .71$ ). The two likelihood to confront items included: a) “I will be likely to confront others in the future having watched this interaction,” and b) “This interaction inspired me to stand up for others in the future” ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

## Results

For the memory item, most respondents (65%) responded at the midpoint of this scale, indicating that they remembered viewing the video somewhat. A test of Hypothesis One revealed that there was no statistical difference between the cognitive beliefs,  $F(1, 174) = 0.04, p = .84, \omega^2 = 0$ , affective reactions,  $F(1, 174) = 0.17, p = .68, \omega^2 = 0$ , or likelihood to confront,  $F(1, 174) = 0.37, p = .54, \omega^2 = .0$ , as a result of confrontations enacted by a target versus an ally.

A test of Hypothesis 2 revealed that participants indicated that confrontations marked by low conflict (calm and general;  $M = 4.22, SD = 1.10$ ) elicited more positive cognitive beliefs than those marked by high conflict (aggressive and personal;  $M = 4.22, SD = 1.10$ ),  $F(1, 174) = 25.89, p < .001, \omega^2 = .11$ . This pattern was not found with respect to affective reactions,  $F(1, 174) = 1.13, p = .29, \omega^2 = .01$ , or likelihood to confront,  $F(1, 174) = 1.30, p = .26, \omega^2 = .01$ .

At Time Two, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported. Specifically, confrontations enacted in a calm way ( $M = 4.81, SD = 1.33$ ) elicited more positive beliefs than those enacted in an aggressive way ( $M = 3.64, SD = 1.37$ ),  $F(1, 174) = 43.64, p < .001, \omega^2 =$

.19. There were no significant differences for affective reactions,  $F(1, 174) = 1.34, p = .25, \omega^2 = 0$ , or likelihood to confront,  $F(1, 174) = 2.06, p = .15, \omega^2 = .01$ .

Hypothesis 4 was not supported at Time Two. There was not a statistical difference between confrontations enacted in a personalized way and those enacted in a generalized way for cognitive beliefs,  $F(1, 174) = 0.50, p = .48, \omega^2 = 0$ , affective reactions,  $F(1, 174) = 0.14, p = .71, \omega^2 = 0$ , or likelihood to confront,  $F(1, 174) = 0.04, p = .55, \omega^2 = 0$ .

### **Responses to ally confrontations over time**

See Tables 7, 8, and 9 for the means and standard deviations of ratings of cognitions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions, respectively. Allies who confronted in an calm way (either personal or general) elicited more positive cognitive beliefs than allies who confronted in an aggressive way,  $F(1, 174) = 17.03, p < .001, \omega^2 = .07$ , and than the control condition,  $F(1, 174) = 3.78, p = .05, \omega^2 = .02$ . In addition, the calm, personalized condition elicited more positive beliefs than the calm, generalized condition,  $F(1, 174) = 4.19, p = .04, \omega^2 = .02$ , and the control condition,  $F(1, 174) = 4.19, p = .04, \omega^2 = .02$ . These differences are displayed in Figure 7<sup>5</sup>. There were no significant differences with respect to attitudes for confrontations enacted by allies at Time Two.

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<sup>5</sup> Note that the range of the scale on this graph is from 2.5 – 5.5.

Table 7

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Cognitions in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Allies at Time Two*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	3.45 <sup>a</sup>	1.01
Aggressive	Generalized	3.92 <sup>a</sup>	1.52
Calm	Personalized	5.24 <sup>bc</sup>	1.33
Calm	Generalized	4.45 <sup>b</sup>	1.29
Control		4.41 <sup>b</sup>	1.16

*Note.* Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

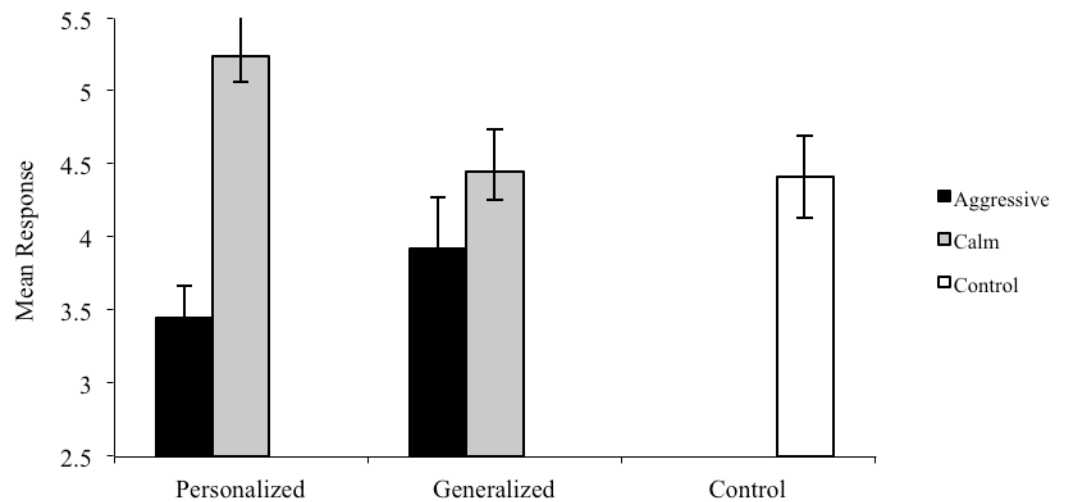


Figure 7. Mean ratings of cognitions in response to confrontations enacted by allies.

Table 8

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Attitudes in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Allies at Time Two*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	3.81	1.23
Aggressive	Generalized	4.00	1.12
Calm	Personalized	4.46	0.93
Calm	Generalized	4.18	1.22
Control		3.91	0.67

*Note.* Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

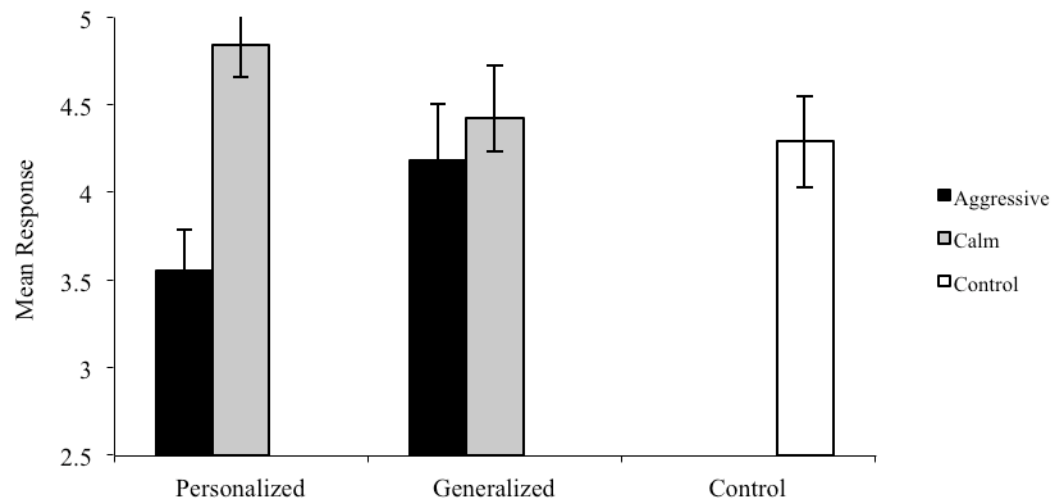
With respect to likelihood of confronting, allies who were calm and personal elicited a higher likelihood of confronting than when they were aggressive and personal,  $F(1, 174) = 11.77, p < .01, \omega^2 = .06$ , or when they were calm and general,  $F(1, 174) = 4.87, p = .03, \omega^2 = .03$ . This condition was not rated significantly more negatively than the aggressive, general condition,  $F(1, 174) = 2.49, p = .12, \omega^2 = .01$ , or the control condition,  $F(1, 174) = 3.23, p = .07, \omega^2 = .02$ . See Figure 8 for a visual representation of these differences.

Table 9

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Behavioral Intentions in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Allies at Time Two*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	3.55 <sup>a</sup>	1.10
Aggressive	Generalized	4.18 <sup>ab</sup>	1.41
Calm	Personalized	4.84 <sup>b</sup>	1.20
Calm	Generalized	4.42 <sup>b</sup>	1.35
Control		4.29 <sup>ab</sup>	1.07

*Note.* Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.



*Figure 8.* Mean ratings of behavioral intentions in response to confrontations enacted by allies.

### Responses to target confrontations over time

See Tables 10, 11, and 12 for the means and standard deviations of ratings of beliefs, affective reactions, and likelihood to confront, respectively. Targets who confronted in a calm way (either personalized or generalized) elicited more favorable beliefs than targets who confronted in an aggressive way,  $F(1, 174) = 27.10, p < .001, \omega^2 = .12$ , and the control condition,  $F(1, 174) = 5.31, p = .02, \omega^2 = .02$ . Interestingly, targets who confronted in a calm and general way elicited more positive beliefs than the control condition, though this difference did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance,  $F(1, 174) = 3.47, p = .06, \omega^2 = .02$ . These differences are displayed in Figure 9<sup>6</sup>.

Table 10

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Cognitions  
in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Targets*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	3.29 <sup>a</sup>	1.62
Aggressive	Generalized	3.83 <sup>a</sup>	0.99
Calm	Personalized	4.88 <sup>b</sup>	1.38
Calm	Generalized	5.22 <sup>b</sup>	1.09
Control		4.41 <sup>b</sup>	1.16

*Note.* Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

<sup>6</sup> Note that the range of the scale on this graph is from 2.5 – 5.5.



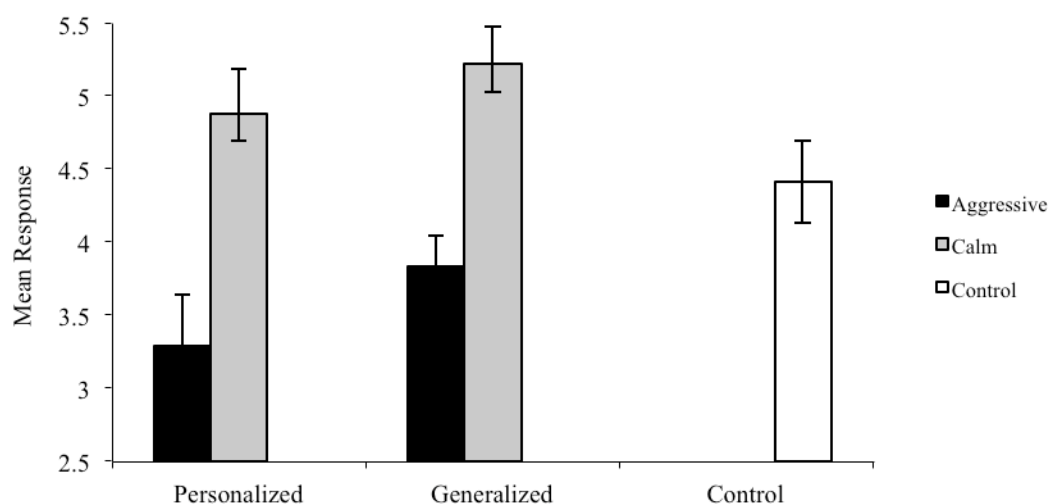


Figure 9. Mean ratings of cognitions in response to confrontations enacted by targets.

With respect to attitudes and behavioral intentions, there were no significant differences at Time Two for confrontations enacted by targets.

Table 11

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Attitudes in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Targets*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	4.11	1.07
Aggressive	Generalized	3.98	0.87
Calm	Personalized	3.78	1.54
Calm	Generalized	4.27	0.96
Control		3.91	0.67

Note. Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

Table 12

*Means and Standard Deviations for Ratings of Behavioral Intentions in Response to Confrontations Enacted by Targets*

Valence	Orientation	Mean	SD
Aggressive	Personalized	4.48	1.22
Aggressive	Generalized	3.98	1.03
Calm	Personalized	3.81	1.54
Calm	Generalized	4.25	1.47
Control		4.29	1.07

Note. Means with different superscripts are significantly different from one another.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion**

The purpose of this dissertation was to study the effects of confrontations of prejudice. While previous work has examined this topic broadly, this dissertation had several specific goals. I will first discuss each of these goals, highlighting the implications and limitations associated with each. I will then highlight implications for organizations and for individual employees and briefly discuss methodological limitations. Finally, I will discuss future research endeavors that may be spurred by this research.

### **Goals revisited**

The first goal of this dissertation was to extend empirical research concerning confrontation to a workplace context. This study achieved this goal by framing the confrontation in a working environment. The confrontation occurred between two employees at their place of employment. The topic of the confrontation concerned a workplace-related subject, the firing of a coworker. In addition, the dependent variables were chosen because of their relevance in a workplace setting. Finally, approximately half of the sample that participated were full-time employees from the same industry. Importantly, when the analyses were conducted with the sample (student vs. employee) included as an independent variable, no significant differences emerged beyond what would be expected by chance alone. Although the study was situated in an organizational context, since participants viewed video-taped interactions, it is impossible to assess some organizational variables, such as climate, culture, or social norms. These are rich areas for future research.

The second goal of this dissertation was to examine gay men as the target group of prejudice. While most previous work (c.f., Hyers, 2010) has used Blacks and women as the target groups, it is important to expand to other groups. Gay employees are a particularly timely and important group to study with respect to confrontation because of the lack of federal (and often local and organizational) protection against discrimination. In addition, while other forms of discrimination-reduction strategies have received empirical attention (e.g., disclosure, acknowledgement, providing individuating information, compensating), confrontation has not yet been studied with respect to discrimination reduction against gay individuals in workplace settings. This study achieved this goal by specifically creating a confrontation concerning the sexual orientation of a coworker. In addition, the identity of the confronter was manipulated such that the confronter identified as a member of the target group (gay himself) or as a supportive ally (not gay himself). In this study, there was generally not a significant overall difference between confrontations enacted by a target group member and confrontations enacted by an ally. However, when differences emerged, they suggested that confrontations enacted by allies received more positive ratings than those enacted by target group members. These results are important because of the context in which confrontations occur. Most other discrimination-reduction strategies place the onus of responsibility on the minority individual. However, past research has shown that minority individuals can be perceived as being self-interested and merely complaining (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). In addition, managing one's identity can be related to distraction, stress, and anxiety (Wegner & Lane, 1985) and lead to more negative workplace outcomes (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Law et al., 2011). Thus, the notion that allies can be effective

confronters on behalf of stigmatized employees is extremely valuable. First, allies can confront in situations where targets cannot. Some negativity may occur when target group members are not present. In these cases, allies can act as more sets of watchful eyes against group-based negativity. Second, allies can also take some of the burden off of target group members in managing a diverse organizational climate. Discrimination reduction strategies can occupy a great deal of cognitive resources that could be better spent devoted to work-related tasks. Allies that confront can allow targets to focus on things besides their own identity management. Third, allies may not be prone to the negative backlash that targets may receive in response to confrontations. Past research has shown that ally confronters elicit more self-directed negative affect (e.g., guilt) than targets do (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Czopp et al., 2006). Fourth and finally, the results of this study suggest that allies may be more *effective* confronters than targets in terms of affecting behavioral intentions. Targets were rated lower than allies on the measure of likelihood of confronting, suggesting that allies are more successful in inducing participants to confront in the future.

The third goal of this dissertation was to consolidate previous findings concerning interpersonal confrontation. Most previous work has been conducted in controlled laboratory settings using convenience samples of undergraduates. In addition, these previous studies isolated specific variables (i.e., confronter identity, conflict) one at a time. This study examined previously studied constructs simultaneously, allowing for a more complete analysis of the interactive nature of confrontation characteristics, in addition to replicating previous findings. In particular, confrontations enacted by allies were rated more favorably than those enacted by targets with respect to behavioral

intentions, but not with respect to cognitions or attitudes (although these patterns were in the hypothesized direction). These findings are in accord with previous research. For example, Czopp et al. (2006) found that participants did not differ in the extent to which they provided stereotypical (cognitive) responses following a confrontation by the identity of the confronter. More specifically, Czopp and Monteith (2003) found that participants who were confronted by allies reported they would feel more desire to change their behaviors than those who were confronted by targets. The results in this study directly mirror those found in previous research. In addition, confrontations enacted with high conflict were rated more negatively than those enacted with low conflict. These findings are in accord with Czopp et al. (2006) and Hyers (2010) who also found that low conflict was preferred to high conflict.

The fourth goal of this dissertation was to clarify the concept of “conflict” in confrontations. In past research, conflict in confrontations has differentially been operationalized as the valence (aggressive or calm; Czopp et al., 2006) or the orientation (personalized to the individual perpetrator or generalized to society at large; Hyers, 2010). However, this dissertation examined these two forms of conflict simultaneously, allowing for an analysis of how these two forms of conflict interact with each other. Indeed, the results of this study suggest that, while there is a main effect of conflict, this finding is qualified by several relevant interactions. For instance, confronters who adopted an aggressive and personalized style were rated lower with respect to beliefs, affective reactions, and behavioral intentions regardless of the identity of the confronter. Similarly, when targets adopted an aggressive and generalized style, they tended to be rated more negatively than when they adopted either of the calm styles. However, allies

who adopted an aggressive and generalized style did not receive lower ratings (this style was perceived to be as effective as either of the calm styles when enacted by an ally). An important difference between the results obtained in this study and those of previous studies (and of relevance here), is the fact that these participants watched a confrontation between two other individuals, rather than being involved themselves. This idea will be expanded upon in the next section.

Regarding the relative “strengths” of valence and orientation in affecting subsequent beliefs, affect, and future confrontation behaviors, some clear patterns emerged in these data. However, they must be interpreted with respect to the interactive nature of these variables with the identity of the confronter. Specifically, targets who were general received much lower ratings when they were also aggressive (rather than calm) with respect to every outcome variable. This pattern was not found for targets who confronted in a personalized way. However, this pattern was not the same for allies. Allies who were general were not rated differently based on level of aggression. They were, however, rated more negatively when they were personal and aggressive than when they were personal and calm with respect to every outcome variable.

In regard to the relative impact of the personalized nature of the confrontation, the orientation only made a consistent difference with respect to all three outcome variables for allies who were aggressive such that also being personal led to lower ratings. Interestingly, allies who were calm and personal received more positive ratings than allies who were calm and general with respect to cognitions.

These results again highlight the highly interactive nature of the independent variables in this study. Although there was weak support for a main effect concerning the

identity of the confronter, these results indicate that allies and targets are indeed perceived differently when they adopt different styles. Thus, although one of the goals of this study was to clarify the relative nature of two different conflict styles, the results suggest that this question may not be as enlightening without considering the interactive nature of these variables.

The fifth goal of this dissertation was to determine whether bystanders could be affected by merely witnessing a confrontation between two other individuals. Previous work has involved participants in the confrontation directly (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Czopp, et al., 2006; Hyers, 2010). Having participants watch a video recorded interaction, rather than participating in the confrontation themselves achieved this goal. This design not only allowed a greater number of participants to be tested, but it also answers a fundamental question, “do confrontations affect only those involved, or can they be instructive to anyone who witnesses them?” Indeed, in real social interactions, confrontations are not likely to occur in a vacuum; others will likely be present. This is especially the case in workplace contexts where many individuals might be interdependent and/or working in close quarters. Social learning theory (Bandura, et al., 1961; 1963) suggests that individuals can gain valuable information by living vicariously through the experiences of others. Indeed, the results of this study suggest that individuals were able to make differential judgments concerning their cognitions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions following witnessing a confrontation of one type or another. If they were not gaining information about the appropriateness of certain types of confrontation styles then there should have been no differences between the varying manipulations. However, because some confrontation styles were rated as being more

favorable than others, this suggests that individuals were able to learn by watching the experiences of other individuals regarding how to confront effectively.

The sixth goal of this dissertation was to examine long-term effects of witnessing a confrontation. This study achieved this goal by obtaining responses from participants several weeks after the experimental manipulation was presented. Given the fact that the video manipulation that participants viewed was less than a minute in length, it is impressive that 1) participants felt relatively confident in their memories of what they saw and 2) statistically significant differences between the experimental conditions persisted and in some cases were exacerbated over time. More specifically, the majority of the findings with respect to the hypotheses presented in this study that persisted over time were in reference to the cognitions items. For instance, Hypotheses 2 and 3 found support at Time Two (as well as at Time One), while Hypothesis 4 did not. This suggests that the effect of aggressiveness in confrontation is more persistent over time than the effect of the orientation of the confrontation.

With respect to confrontations enacted by allies (and keeping in line with the practical application of these results for individuals who may consider confronting), the aggressive and personalized condition was again rated the most negatively with respect to cognitions. However, the aggressive and generalized condition was not rated significantly more positively than the aggressive and personalized condition, suggesting again that the aggressiveness of the confrontation persisted over time. Interestingly, the finding that the allies who confronted in a calm and personalized way were rated the most positively persisted over time. This condition was even rated more positively than the control condition (in fact this difference was exacerbated over time), lending further support for



the notion that this style of confrontation is perceived to be especially effective by third-party bystanders, even beyond what would be expected from a more benign disagreement. This pattern of results was paralleled with respect to behavioral intentions (though the calm, personal condition was not significantly higher than the control condition here).

With respect to cognitions in response to confrontations enacted by targets at Time Two, the two aggressive conditions were again rated more negatively than the calm conditions and the control condition, supporting the notion that aggressiveness in targets is particularly detrimental and that suggesting that this effect persists over time. Thus, and in line with the results obtained at Time One, targets would be well-advised to avoid aggressiveness in confrontations they enact. Interestingly, targets who adopted calm and general confrontation styles were rated more positively than the control condition, at both Time One and Time Two, although these differences were not statistically significant.

A seventh and final goal of this dissertation is to inform the question, “What is the best way to confront?” Although not outlined by formal hypotheses, answering this question will lead to a potential new stream of research focused on confrontations in the workplace. Indeed, since it has been shown that allies and targets who confront are perceived differently (in past studies and, to some extent, this one), it is important to understand more fully the nature of this difference. The results of this study suggest that different strategies are better or worse for targets and allies. In general, confrontations enacted by allies were rated as being equally favorable except in cases where the confrontation was aggressive and personalized. That is, the aggressive and personalized confrontations were rated much lower than any of the other strategies. However, for

targets, the pattern of responding suggests that confrontations enacted in a calm and generalized way were rated the most favorable. The difference between calm, generalized confrontations and calm, personalized confrontations was not significant. This suggests that aggressiveness – whether enacted in a personalized or a generalized way – was perceived as being less favorable than calmness. Thus, targets who wish to confront would be advised to do so in a calm way, with less emphasis on whether the message was personalized or generalized.

### **Is confrontation an effective strategy?**

By including a control condition in this study it was possible to assess the relative effects of different confrontation strategies compared to the reactions one might have to a mild disagreement between employees. This is an important comparison to make because past research has indicated that both targets and allies are often reluctant to engage in confrontations. This analysis is best discussed with respect to the effects of confrontations enacted by allies and by targets separately.

Allies who were aggressive and personal were rated significantly lower than the control condition with respect to cognitions and behavioral intentions. This suggests that this strategy is especially detrimental, beyond what would be expected during a normal disagreement between two employees. This was not the case for attitudes, however. Aggressive and personal allies were not rated significantly lower than the control condition with respect to attitudes. Instead, the other three styles were rated much higher than either the aggressive, personal or the control condition. This implies that the other three strategies elicited *more* positive attitudes compared to a normal disagreement. Interestingly, with respect to cognitive reactions, allies who adopted a calm and personal

style were rated significantly higher than the control condition. This similarly suggests that allies who are calm and personal elicit *more* favorable cognitions, beyond what would be expected from a normal disagreement.

Targets who were aggressive were rated significantly lower than the control condition with respect to both cognitions and behavioral intentions. This suggests that aggressiveness in targets is particularly detrimental, beyond what would be expected from witnessing a normal disagreement. With respect to attitudes, the control condition was only rated as being significantly lower than the calm, generalized condition. This suggests that targets who adopt calm and general confrontation styles may elicit *more* positive attitudes than would be expected from a normal disagreement.

### **Implications for organizations**

The results of this study can be directly applied to diversity management initiatives in organizations. While many organizations have advocacy groups for specific minority groups or supportive human resources policies, these initiatives are often perceived as being “for minorities only.” Although these groups typically welcome non-minority supporters, these individuals are typically not actively recruited or retained within the groups.

However, the results of this study suggest that both minority and non-minority employees could be trained in effective strategies in dealing with prejudice in the workplace. In fact, these results suggest that these two groups should receive different training regarding how to best enact a confrontation with another coworker. In particular, these training initiatives could focus on recruiting non-minority allies to be vocal

advocates, given the results that suggest the positive responses that ally confronters received in this study.

In addition, organizations can work to foster environments in which dialogue concerning minority issues and successful confrontations are commonplace. A recent similar example is the Department of Homeland Security's "See Something, Do Something" campaign. Relatedly, organizations could work to adopt a culture in which confrontations of negativity in the workplace are encouraged and rewarded.

### **Implications for research**

The results of the present study represent a replication, extension, and slight departure from past research. In many ways, the results of this study lend further support for relations that have been reported in past studies. However, by providing relatively high fidelity stimulus manipulations (video recorded interactions) and specifically targeting a working population, this study represents a more rigorous test of these hypotheses. In addition, this study combined many constructs from past research that had previously only been investigated separately. Furthermore, this study attempted to clarify two different manipulations of conflict in confrontations. Therefore, the results of this study were able to answer important questions regarding the ways in which these variables interact with each other. Indeed, many of the main effects were clarified when the interactions were more closely examined and a more clear understanding of the relations concerning confrontation was uncovered.

Another important implication concerns research focused on diversity management efforts. Many past studies have focused on the attitudes that non-minority individuals have of minority group members in order to understand the nature of these

biases. More recently, research has focused on the particular experiences of minority individuals (e.g., Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007) and the strategies that they can adopt to manage their identities in the workplace (Singletary & Hebl, 2009). Many of these studies have shown that coworker support is an extremely important determinant of minority employees' organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job anxiety, and turnover intentions (Griffith & Hebl, 2001; Law et al., 2011; Ragins et al., 2001). Thus, this study was a first attempt to implicate coworkers and examine ways in which they could be best utilized in supporting minority employees.

### **Implications for individual employees**

One of the major implications of this research is the finding that both targets and non-stigmatized allies can be effective in confronting prejudice. This is especially important information for majority group individuals who are sympathetic to problems that minority individuals may face, yet do not know how they can help. Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, and Goodwin (2008) present a model of confrontation that highlights the hurdles one must pass before actually confronting discrimination. This model (and the hurdles therein) is based on Darley and Latane's (1968) classic work on bystander intervention. The results of this study can be directly applied to the hurdles in Ashburn-Nardo et al.'s (2008) Confronting Prejudiced Responses (CPR) model. For instance, Step 4 in the model involves identifying an appropriate response to the prejudiced action. A major hurdle to identifying the appropriate response is having knowledge or experience with confronting. Most individuals have not confronted prejudice, especially majority group members. So, many people may not know what the best response would be and thus are not confident in responding. The results of this study are a first step in empirically

identifying what the appropriate responses to prejudice may be – from both the perspective of a target and an ally. Step 5 in the CPR model is actually taking action in response to prejudice. One hurdle in the way of actually taking action is the belief that confronting the prejudice will lead to negative backlash (see Kaiser & Miller, 2001). However, the results of this study suggest that some forms of confrontation can mitigate the levels of negative backlash. Another hurdle to actually confronting is the belief that the confrontation will not be effective. However, the results of this study suggest that some forms of confrontation are effective means of confronting. Thus, this study can directly be applied to the CPR model of confronting and help to address some of the hurdles that individuals may have in their own decisions of whether to confront or not.

Not only do the results of this study address potential hurdles to confronting, but they give individual employees who wish to confront a first idea of what sort of strategy might be most beneficial in terms of cognitions, attitudes, and subsequent behavioral intentions. Indeed, this study was the first to examine the effects of confronter identity and two different types of conflict simultaneously. Thus, relevant interactions between these variables were identified and a more complete idea of how confrontations are perceived was possible.

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations of this study is the fact that only one actor was used in the role of the confronter and the argument could be made that there is something idiosyncratic to the particular actor that was used that led to the particular pattern of results that was obtained. While this is a possibility, the most important goal of this study was to test specific strategies of confrontation by introducing particular manipulations.

By using the same actor across conditions, the design controls for any effects that may be due to the idiosyncrasies of the actor. Indeed, identifying individual characteristics of particular confronters (beyond restricting the area of interest to specific strategies) would require a very large number of different actors that are quantifiable on an innumerable amount of characteristics. Even in logistically feasible, this question is fundamentally different from the goals of this dissertation. Thus, in order to remain true to the questions relevant to this study, it was imperative that the actor roles remain consistent to control for actor effects.

Another limitation is that both students and employed individuals served as participants. There is debate concerning the use of undergraduate students in organizational research. Some researchers highlight important differences between student and non-student samples in the style of responding (Gordon, Slade, & Schmitt, 1986). However, other research suggests that students' ratings are not less reliable than those provided by employees (Greenberg, 1987). In this study, the pattern of results in the two samples were quite similar (though many of the differences were not significant due to lack of statistical power). In addition, after aggregating the two samples and specifically testing for sample-based effects, only one of 24 tests was significant. This would be expected by chance alone. Thus, although there may be intuitive differences between student and employed samples, these differences did not manifest themselves in the data.

A final limitation with this study is the operationalization of the control condition. The control condition depicted two employees who discussed the recent firing of a coworker (much like the experimental conditions). However, in this condition there was

not a direct challenge to the perpetrator, merely an implied disagreement with his views. This is an appropriate control condition to assess the relative effects of confrontations in the workplace compared to less intense disagreements. This is especially relevant given the findings that some forms of confrontation were actually perceived more favorably than the control condition. However, there is a potential confound in this manipulation regarding the content of the message. Specifically, the control condition depicted a disagreement over the firing of a coworker because of family problems. The experimental conditions, however, depicted a disagreement over the firing of a coworker because of his sexual orientation. Thus, some reactions could have been due solely to the content of the disagreement, rather than the way in which it was handled. A more appropriate design to identify the effects of the content might have included a control condition that also mentioned a coworker who was fired for his sexual orientation, or eight different control conditions, one to correspond to every experimental condition. However, the control condition in this study was valuable in that it allowed for a comparison to a relatively benign disagreement. In addition, the relevant question for this study was how confrontations are perceived in a workplace setting. The fact that some confrontation styles that addressed sexual orientation prejudice in a workplace setting were rated *more* positively than a more benign disagreement is very informative regarding likely reactions to confrontations.

### **Future research**

Future research may attempt to further disentangle the effects of the valence (aggressive vs. calm) and the orientation (personalized vs. generalized) of confrontations. The design of this study did not lend itself to this type of analyses. However, given the



more complex pattern of results that were shown here, it is unclear whether further clarifying these main effects in the absence of clearly relevant interactions would be a worthwhile endeavor.

Another idea for future research would be to include a control condition that also depicts a confrontation concerning prejudice. The control condition in this study depicted an unrelated topic, so respondents may have been influenced solely by the content of the disagreement, rather than by the confrontation styles themselves.

This study used video recorded confrontations as the experimental stimuli. While this allowed for a more controlled manipulation of relevant variables and the ability to reach a large number of participants via the internet, it also resulted in a loss of fidelity. It is unclear how the results would be different if participants viewed the same confrontations in face-to-face interactions as opposed to on video recordings. Furthermore, in the context of organizations, confrontations between coworkers occur in an environment that is complicated by interpersonal and working relationships, company policies, office politics, and a large number of other important situational variables. The most valid test of the relationships examined in this study would entail measuring reactions to confrontations within existing work groups in a systematic way.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

The study of confrontation as a prejudice reduction strategy in organizations is an important new frontier for organizational research. First, it is based on a strong theoretical foundation in the field of social cognition and has received empirical support concerning the effectiveness of addressing prejudice in interpersonal interactions. In addition, confrontation as a strategy entails an exciting new landscape in organizations that mobilizes a new and large cadre of supporters in diversity and equality efforts: ally supporters. These allies are uniquely positioned to be catalysts in organizational and societal change efforts, and research future research should particularly focus on how these individuals can best be utilized. The research presented in this dissertation is a hopeful first step in providing tangible strategies that both allies and targets themselves can adopt in addressing attitudes or behaviors that are marginalizing.

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